CONSORTING WITH THE OTHER: RE-CONSTRUCTING SCHOLASTIC, RHETORICAL AND LITERARY ATTITUDES TO PAGANS AND PAGANISM IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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"This Master's Thesis represents my own work and due acknowledgement is given whenever information is derived from other sources. No part of this Master's Thesis has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other university.

Signed _____"

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Summary

Christian-Biblical theology has traditionally upheld an adversarial relation between Christianity and pagan cultures, with the latter being the Other and, subsequently, of the devil's kingdom. As a study of medieval attitudes towards pagans and paganism(s), my thesis however suggests that Christian culture in the late antique to medieval period consciously adapted pagan cultures for its own ends, with a particular view to the usefulness of pagan cultures. Undercutting the texts that I study is a subtle recognition of the power that the pagan past, the Other that medieval Christianity is always at tussles with, holds over the minds of various individuals.

As a Church Father of the Latin West in Europe, Augustine of Hippo's accommodations towards the Classical culture of his days are fundamental to our understanding how early medieval Christianity undertook a flexible approach towards the paganisms of its days. The literary forms of autobiography, catechetical manual and *historia* in Augustine of Hippo's *Confessiones*, *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De Civitate Dei* mark his negotiations of fourth-century Rome's pagan-literate culture. Augustine's attachment to a pagan legacy of Classical letters was too strong to be denied, and he had to attempt justifying them. In doing so, Augustine of Hippo also made an implicit *apologia* for Christian letters — namely the exposition of the Bible, and its profound truths with which human history and personal life-events might be understood — as the 'new' Classics.

By contrast, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Mabinogion* mark a narrative concern respectively with the Anglo-Saxon and Welsh-Celtic customs and folkloric traditions of Britain, which the medieval *ecclesiam* recognized as deeply ingrained in folk consciousness. Both texts reveal a functionalist approach undertaken by their scribe-author(s) respectively, wherein pagan motifs and tropes found in oral folklore and pagan belief structures are ransacked and re-invented for a new Christian purpose of affirming Christian superiority.

On the one hand, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* reinforces this tapping into a folkloric consciousness insofar as it demonstrates the surfacing of local cults of saints and holy relics within eighth century Northumbria with their relevant links to earlier pagan cults of nature-magic. The Anglo-Saxon church had, as Bede's text suggests, hence amalgamated pagan belief structures common to the Anglo-Saxon barbarians with Christian practices to form a syncretic version of Christianity. On the other hand, the *Mabinogion* stands as a later medieval compilation of various assorted tales and motifs from earlier oral-based Welsh myths and folkloric archetypes. These originally pagan myths, while retaining residual elements of the socio-religious beliefs of Celtic Wales, did not however remain stable throughout this process of transmission, but were adapted and re-invented by the medieval Christian scribes for their own ends of instructing their

audience in moral-ethical lessons. Common to both texts is an active Christianizing of originally pagan oral sources and beliefs, thereby constituting a means by which the pagan past is preserved.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for the following terms below:

Conf.	*Confessiones*
DCD.	*De Civitate Dei*
DDC.	*De Doctrina Christiana*
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*

In Kanan Makiya's *The Rock*, a novel set amidst the inter-religious exchanges between Christians, Jews and Muslims in seventh-century Jerusalem, a Muslim boy, Ishaq, contends with his father K'ab (a Jewish convert to Islam) that pagan habits of thought have remained even after Muslims have claimed to purge the *Ka'aba* of idols and false gods. He asserts to his father's piqued indignation, that *Al Aqsa* the Rock (the Black Stone of the *Ka'aba*) which is also the representative symbol of their monotheistic religion, did not turn black with the sin of sexual impurity. Rather it was a hypothesis advanced by pagan-minded individuals and groups who need an objectified and material representative of God and His divine order. His remarks are blasphemous to his father's monotheistic beliefs, since he implies that the core sacred symbol of their monotheistic faith is a remnant of paganism. Ishaq argues:

> In a certain class of human minds, the principle of idolatry is never eradicated. It is, after all, a principle that has given form to the faith of many different kinds of people throughout the ages. This principle requires that, for the exercise of faith, some tangible object should be available to the bodily senses — whether in the form of a relic, a holy spot with which an act may be associated, or an image that will represent what their minds are too lazy to conceive; it matters little whether this thing be the true one or not, so long as it answers their purpose. (158)

Makiya's novel marks a big jump in time, religious belief, and also cultural idiosyncrasies into the seventh-century world of Arabia, far away from the world of medieval Western Europe that I focus on. What the character-narrator of Ishaq advances is however salient in highlighting the phenomenon of acculturation, where the "new" social party attempts to superimpose its prevailing values on the pagans, but at the same time, assimilates their prevailing norms and ideologies

whether wittingly or unwittingly. This process reflects what actually happens in Augustine of Hippo's *Confessiones*, *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Civitas Dei*, Bede's *Historica Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and the Welsh *Mabinogion*, capturing medieval Christendom's attitudes to pre-existing pagan cultures in the process of its advent into Western Europe.

I. "Paganism" or "Paganisms": Vital Categories of Differences and Anachronisms

Before I move onto a contextual exposition of these five texts, I should clarify the vital risks that one undertakes in attempting to re-construct the Christian-pagan relations circulating within Europe as revealed in these texts, especially with regards to how we must define the term "paganism." The first risk we run is to classify Christian and pagan as monolithic discourses operating in an environment of mutual conflict. As De Reu says,

> the notion that Christianity simply steamrollered its way over paganism, crushed and utterly defeated it, is incorrect. The heathen defended their religion, after all, even by force of arms, and they used the Christian model to fill the awkward gaps which were a structural weakness in their religious concept. Moreover, in the interests of a 'smooth' conversion the church was forced was forced to make countless compromises with paganism, and not all of these were the work of missionaries in the field. (13)

De Reu suggests here a relationship of mutual exchange, where Christianity informed paganism and vice versa. Alain Dierkens reinforces his point in arguing for a pagan Middle Ages, characterized by pagan cultures' survival despite Christian claim to ideological and political dominance. He claims that,

> the issue is not one of a simple opposition between 'paganism' and 'Christianity'. The reality is too complex for that, displaying a wide

> range of influence, osmosis and acculturation. The real opposition is — as has become very plain — between a series of paganisms and the gospel of Christ. (55)

Instead of viewing pagan religions as the antagonist to Christianity, we must therefore acknowledge the possibility of Christianity's indebtedness to them in the process of inter-religious contact.

Equally important for understanding how acculturation works in the case of the Christian-pagan encounter, we must also understand that we risk assuming the presence of a monolithic tradition of paganism with its definitive set of values and practices. Instead of identifying with this mindset, we should understand the authors we are studying under the aegis of "paganisms," multiple cultures that are highly dependent on the geopolitical region and socio-historical milieu in which pagan religions are practiced. The etymological origins of the words, "pagan" and "paganism," reveal the stereotypes that abound when we talk and think of pagan cultures. After all, the Latin root-word "*paganus*" has been unflatteringly associated with "a villager" (Dowden, 3). The link between the villager and the pagan who does not profess or practise any form of belief in Christianity is arbitrary, since the villager is perceived as "a backward country person, a yokel, who is still engaged in the rustic error of paganism" (Dowden, 3). Similarly, calling someone a heathen refers to him practising his religion through burnt offerings and sacrifices amidst the locale of the wild uncultivated countryside in our modern context, but as Dowden points out, it may just simply mean "someone who lives in wild places" (4). The connotations of rusticity and primitive nature-based religion forms a direct opposition to the literate-liturgical culture of

orthodox Christianity in the Middle Ages, which utilizes either Latin or Greek as their *lingua franca* and the Bible as a canonical text. But as James O'Donnell warns:

> One danger of such a simple dichotomy is that we tend to make each side in the other's image. In this case, the tendency in that direction has chiefly taken the form of hypostasizing paganism as an organized, coherent movement, based on certain commonly held principles and led by striking and dynamic figures who occasionally fell out with one another over the right to control the movement.
>
> Sober reflection, however, should reveal the *a priori* unlikeness of this situation. The non-Christian side of society was nothing if not diverse in its religious inclinations. (online source)

Such stereotypical conceptions of the pagan — a figure understood within early patristics as simply a non-Christian — must therefore be rethought, in the light of the diversity of traditions within which pagan beliefs are practiced or professed.

What simply distinguishes the "pagan" apart from the "Christian," if we are to undo the anachronisms associated with these terms? In lieu of using "paganism" as an umbrella term in this thesis, I choose to use "paganisms" in the plural to highlight the plurality with which we have to view the various non-Christian practices and beliefs that appear in these texts. I restrict my study of the phenomena of "paganisms" and "pagans" to non-Christians working outside of the framework of a Judeo-Christian cosmology. Hence the other Semitic-monotheistic religions like Islam and Judaism do not receive attention here, as they would demand another thesis on their own.

In the choice of relevant texts of study, I chose authors and texts of radically different literary traditions, Augustine of the late antique period of Latin letters, Bede an Anglo-Latin monk writing the historical chronicle, and the Celtic

tales of the *Mabinogion*. As a Church Father of the Latin West, Augustine's writings are fundamental to our understanding the ambivalence with which the early Christian church viewed paganisms. As a contrast to Augustine's writings, the insular focus of Bede's *Historia* and the *Mabinogion* on Anglo-Saxon England and Celtic Wales respectively reveal a folkloric imagination that permeates these medieval literary texts, hence affirming a survival of local British customs and traditions of pagan import. While the limitations of working with English translations must be acknowledged, these translations do not however hinder us from understanding their authors' views of paganisms, since my study is not a linguistic-philological project.

II. Imagined Communities and the Validity of Cultural Criticism

In focusing on non-Christian communities and cultures, I have claimed that our understanding of "paganisms" is dependent on the geopolitical region in which they are practised and believed. I have recourse especially to Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities." In this concept, he posits that nations are motivated in their political strategies by an acknowledgement of these communities' existence:

> the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (6)

This concept is applicable to late antiquity and the Middle Ages to a qualifiable extent because the notion of the *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome) was the dominant driving force in both the Roman Empire and the latter barbarian successor-states

sprouting in Western Europe after its fall. The conversion of Constantine I, known as Constantine the Great, cannot be underestimated as a vital force in which the Christian notion of *Pax Christi* (the Peace of Christ) is eventually seen by early Christians like Eusebius to coincide with the *Pax Romana*. Also, Anderson's concept is significant to this study of medieval attitudes towards pagans and paganisms, owing to this concurrence of *pax romana* and *pax Christi*, where subsequently the later Christian culture sees itself as dominant over all other "pagan" and "non-Christian" worldviews and practices.

In addition, Anderson has termed Christendom as one of the "great classical communities" which "conceived of [itself] as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a terrestrial order of power" (13). While his statement sounds sweeping, the notion of Latin and Greek as God-inspired languages of Christianity (as opposed to the Hebrew of the Jews) points to Christianity's particular assertion of its sacrosanct nature.[1] The sacrosanct status of the Christian faith explains how Christianity accommodated the other pagan religions and customs, while it sought ascendancy over them. As Robert Doran also asserts, Christendom works by the assumptions inherent in the parable of the mustard seed told by Jesus: "when sown upon the ground, [it] is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" (Mark 4:30-32). The danger, as Doran aptly puts, is to treat Christianity as

[1] This is explained insofar as Greek is the inspired language of the New Testament, while Latin is the inspired language of the Vulgate translation(s) of the New Testament.

if it is a mustard tree growing independently of "particular times and places": the "mustard tree must be seen as part of an ecosystem, not an independent entity" (3). Christianity, perceived through this claim, does not exist in a historical vacuum, but is constantly engaged in dialogue and polemic with the surroundings faiths and socio-religious practices of its times.

It must be added when Christianity constitutes itself as a valid community, it subsequently categorizes pagans as an unacceptable Other. The parable of the mustard seed, with the image of the birds representing unclean spirits in Jewish exegesis, hints also that as the church grows, it will attract the attentions of those whom it regards as agents of Satan. Patristic theology consequently had to set up its ideological-theological opponent of the Other for easy classification, through the various other pagan religions, and the hordes of believers and practitioners caught up in what it regards to be error. The simple formula which dominated the Christian church for centuries after its advent has always been "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" ("Outside the church no salvation") (Dupuis, 84). This axiom justified the rigid move of Christians in Roman and early medieval society to demonize pagans as damned unless they convert.

The dichotomy between "us" (the Christians) versus "them" (the pagans), which denies the vital pluralisms amongst pagans and pagan religions, is best signified in the heritage of orthodox Pauline Christianity, which declares that the power at work in these other faiths, ideas and practices is simply "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), namely Satan, the adversary to God's reign and order. Paul also goes on to assert that this very Satan, more than an

allegorical figure acting on the plane of cosmic conflict between good and evil, is the Father of ethical and moral evil, inciting disobedience and rebellion against the Christian God in non-Christians: "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). The pagan, falling under the domain of Satan, must then naturally be evil and perfidious in this schematic perception of things, while the Christian, renewed in his knowledge of the true God and the true faith, consequently holds the monopoly on truth together with his fellow Christian believers.

III. Translatio, Adaptatio, and Cultural Assimilations: How Christians Learnt from Pagans, and Vice Versa

If we use this Pauline strategy of demonization to understand early Christian-pagan interrelations, we end up constructing two camps based on the idea of mutual siege. We risk portraying Christians of the late antique and early medieval worlds as merely practising a "world-rejecting" religion, "given its strong soteriological-eschatological orientation epitomized by the transcendent act of Redemption" (Russell, 52). The untidy assortment of traditions practiced amongst pagans, from the rational schools of Classical philosophy in late antiquity to the folk religions of the masses in early and high medieval (Western European) society, are subsequently relegated to the lane of "world-accepting religions," faiths which express the sacred locus of the community by promoting "a strong sense of in-group identification and loyalty" (Russell, 48). Trying to push the dichotomy of "God's children versus Satan's children" too far is the direct result of this fallacy, which we must guard against. For as stipulated by the Great

Commission that Jesus Christ is believed to have issued to His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19), the thrust of Christianity (with Christendom being the *imperium* into which it evolved subsequently) was a missionary-mindedness. The Christians of the Roman world, and its various successor-states in the West of early medieval Europe, actively engaged with the pagan cultures of their times, by evangelizing them, instead of stigmatizing them as alien cultures. This militated against the disengaged spirit of Tertullian's exclamation, "*Quid Athenae Hierosolymis*?" ("What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?"), suggesting that the relationship between Christianity and pagan cultures was less than securely one of antagonism.

a) Biblical and Patristic Perspectives on Pagan Learning and Letters

For successful evangelization by Christians to pagans to occur, the Christian missionaries must subsequently recognize points of commonality between them. The Christian missionary must speak in the ethno-cultural language and idioms of the pagans to whom he ministers the gospel of Christ's exclusive salvation. As Ramsay MacMullen has stressed, Christians must contend with the realization that they "came late, as aliens to cultural systems already formed around them"(78). Such a statement implies that vital accommodations must be made by the Christian missionary towards the pagan cultures that pre-exist Christianity, whether they come in oral forms or written form.

In further trying to understand Christian-pagan relations as a complex process of acculturation, we must then undo the fallacy of thinking of Christianity

as just a "popular movement" of the plebeians (Cameron, 36), especially the Christianity of Augustine's Roman world in the fourth century. In Augustine's works, I do not concentrate on the polytheistic traditions circulating amongst the plebeian masses of the Roman world, from thanksgiving rites during agricultural harvests and childbirth rituals, to the established mystery religions of the Roman Empire. Rather, I concern myself with "civic paganisms" circulating amongst the senatorial aristocracy and the academic elite of the Roman world, which stretch from selective cults of aristocratic Roman traditions devoted to the worship of certain gods in the pantheon, to the literary-philosophical-academic traditions with which this aristocracy grew up.[2] When I say "civic paganisms," I refer to an urbanized culture that is anchored within the Roman *civitas* and based on the primacy of textuality, as opposed to the other authors or texts I study in this thesis.

It is necessary to note that the system of Classical *paideia* (education) that Augustine and his pagan (and even Christian) contemporaries grew up with stipulated a heavy emphasis on rhetorical training, and public readings in Classical literature and logic in Augustine's fourth century Roman world. Converts amongst the senatorial aristocracy and the academic elite to which Augustine belonged could hardly deny this strong attachment to the pagan heritage of Classical letters and rhetoric, as much as Augustine wanted to reject it.

[2] Constantine the Great is a figure who demonstrates the preponderance of such a "civic paganism." Years after his conversion to Christianity, the royal treasury's coins were still emblazoned with the emblem of the Sun God (*Soli Deo Invictus*) whom he had worshipped before his conversion. A need to abide by civic traditions such as maintaining the symbols of the old gods was still very much active in his times, even as he asserted his newfound role as God's vicegerent.

Even if these newly converted Christians amongst the elite were willing to forgo the religious traditions of god-worship anathematized by Christian authorities, they were not as willing to forgo the literary traditions to which they were lovingly attached. This dilemma is summed up in McMullen's remark, "secular literature from the pagan past, Christian readers avoided, or they struggled in their conscience to justify it or not to read too much" (6). Thus they tended to adapt the values of Christianity to suit those of the aristocratic-academic elite, to make it appealing to them (Salzman, 16).

To see how Christians like Augustine adapted the Gospel message of salvation and Christian *ethos* to appeal to civic-minded pagans, we must turn to a Biblical antecedent where Paul re-interprets the available ethno-cultural norms used by pagans in Christian terms, by spiritualizing or re-contextualizing them (Minnis, 8). Paul's argument with the Athenian pagans on Mars Hill is an example. While stressing the Christian God as a transcendent deity unbound by space and time, but yet the impetus for cosmic movement and being, his sermon also alludes to the pagan literature of its days,

> for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, *For we are also his offspring*. For as much as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (Acts 17: 28-30, own italics).

As Sordi notes, "having won their attention, Paul goes on to quote and interpret from a Jewish-Christian point of view the first nineteenth lines of Aratus of Soli's *Phaenomena*, a work with which he would have been very familiar, coming as he did from nearby Tarsus" (Sordi, 158). That Paul chooses to quote from a pagan

poet to affirm the existence of a transcendent deity with a name (Christ) as opposed to the inscription of "To The Unknown God" (Acts 17:23) the pagans attribute to him, shows him stressing that the difference between him and the pagans is a matter of degree and not kind. The problem is not that the pagans do not know God necessarily; rather, it is that they attempt to know God and His nature through their own means, independently of the Bible. Paul's accommodation of pagan learning here is an early case-in-point of Christians' incorporation of pagan learning by performing a redemptive exegesis of it.

This case of the adaptation of pagan letters is similarly found in the three core texts of Augustine of Hippo I study, *Confessiones*, *De Civitas Dei*, and *De Doctrina Christiana*, which attempt to bridge the gap between Classical learning and Christian hermeneutics. These three texts were produced specifically from the viewpoint of one theologian and early Church Father who was also a product of Greco-Roman system of education in rhetoric and literature. The conflation of these categories of "pagan Other" and "Christian self" in Augustine's texts, is best explained by the relation of Christian *hermeneutics* to pagan discourses and rhetoric. While Augustine eschews the theological subtleties of pagan ideas and forms that are blasphemous against Christianity, he does not wholly anathematize the prevalent rhetorical-philosophical-narrative discourses of a pagan literary tradition antecedent to Christianity. Instead, he attempts to adapt three predominant discourses of pagan literature to Christian ends, acknowledging Christian thought's indebtedness to a pagan past in the three anchor-points of *philosophia*, *historia* (a history of this *saeculum*, the temporal world), and

rhetorica. The "conversion narratives" of *Confessiones* show an interaction between pagan letters in Rome and a newfound Christian vocabulary based on notions of rebirth, renewal and re-constituted self-knowledge in the light of the Scriptures — namely "*metanoia*" (a change in will), attached to Christian-conversion experiences (Salzman, 12).[3] Here, Augustine maps his progression from being a "pagan" enamored with belief in and worship of "false gods" (through his early pagan and Manichean years), to his later years as a catechumen and then confirmed Christian believer in the Catholic church. This conversion process is paradoxically one inspired by pagan *philosophia* (the love of wisdom) that spurs him onto a search for *sapientia* (wisdom) through pagan syncretic cults, pagan literature and philosophy. This highlights his indebtedness to pagan *scientia* (knowledge). Apparently a narrative of "personal" conversion to the truth of the Catholic Church, *Confessiones* is also a sign of Christian letters' acculturation by pagan eloquence on a metaliterary level.

De Civitas Dei, by contrast, reveals the indebtedness of Christian letters to its various pagan counterparts through enforcing a large schema of *historia*, which seeks to corroborate histories of the "profane" — Rome's history of decline and fall — into a larger pattern of "sacred"-eschatological history (Eliade, 20). Signs of acculturation by pagan letters are imbedded in this work's redemptive exegesis of Roman historical annals and rational voices amongst philosophers in the Classical world. Where "the human soul tends to disperse itself in a baffling

[3] The prefix of "*metanoia*," is the prepositional clause in Greek, "meta," which means either "after" or "with," and therefore denotes an experience that happens after a drastic turn of events in line with conversion narratives. This word carries the tension between a conversion incumbent upon revelation by divine intervention and a gradual progression from ignorance to illumination.

multiplicity of intense but baffling loves" as a pagan non-believer, Christ enables the Christian to find the reflection of God's "order of supreme beauty," the transcendent *Amor*, in the love of God and of his neighbor (Brown, 1995; 22). However, the Christian has much to learn from the righteous pagans who have clung honorably to pagan ideals of virtue — even if they have failed from the Christian point-of-view and must be seen as partial, negative examples of virtue. It is through the emergence of the literary figure of the righteous pagan within Augustine's readings of pagan history, philosophy and oratory that he thus accommodates the virtues of the pagan Classics, recognizing their literary-rhetorical-historical figures as sources of potential inspiration to ethical-moral virtue for the learned Christian.

In turning to *De Doctrina Christiana*, the third text of Augustine that I will study, the next level of acculturation of Christian letters by pagan learning is revealed on a level of self-conscious *meta-rhetorical* discourse. Here, Augustine defines the complex relation between Classical rhetoric and the new art of preaching in Christian circles (*ars praedicandi*) as the indebtedness of the latter to the former. Augustine's learned background as a professor of rhetoric exposed him to a great sense of the potential of that rhetoric to be exploited for the benefits both of the Christian preacher-exegete in his public sermons and homilies, and of his congregation. Therefore, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, while purporting to find in the *ars praedicandi* a new means to transcend and improve upon the ambiguities of Classical rhetoric, he justifies the use of the pagan *ars rhetorica* within Christian elocution through its "ability to compel belief"(Minnis, 10).

Here, while the Christian end is found in hermeneutics, the act of understanding and structuring the world through discourses of knowledge, it is simultaneously an acknowledgement of antecedents found within the pagan Classics. Christian letters has not eradicated the authoritative appeal of Classical letters and in fact seeks to be its heir.

IV. Popular Religion and Popular Folktales: Functionalist Means of Accommodating a Pagan Other

We can thus see Augustine's three texts as didactic models of discourse in which Augustine ransacks forms and ideas in pagan learning to furnish his style and content. In Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Mabinogion*, however, this focus recedes into the background, because of the shift from the book as primarily *pedagogue* to the book as *narrative compendium*. I thus study Bede's historical chronicle and the anonymously authored narratives of the *Mabinogion* as examples of acculturation occurring between Christian and pagan beliefs and practices in the light of this function of the book as a narrative compendium. As opposed to Augustine's texts which stress the primacy of a legacy of Roman-Classical literacy in letters, these texts foreground the vital relationships between orality (the predominant oral-pagan religious and literary traditions of insular Britain) and literacy — an aspect which cannot be overstated. The difference between an earlier oral culture and a later written culture cannot be underestimated as a point of entry which Christian missionaries capitalized upon for their evangelization efforts, or even which Christian scribes attempted to interpret for the benefits of a medieval audience.

In studying the acculturation process, I do not assume a unanimous conformity between the Celtic roots of the *Mabinogion* (itself not a uniformly penned collection of tales but a compilation of native tales from the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest*), and the local legends and tales surrounding Bede's unstable world of conflict between various Germanic tribes within *Historia Ecclesiastica*. As contrasts to Augustine in the portrayal of Christian accommodations of pagans, these texts must be seen as foregrounding the ethos of a barbarian culture from a Roman point of view, which the Christian evangelists are seeking to replace with a written elite culture of their own.[4] Aron Gurevich has expressed this accommodation in his coining of the term, "medieval popular culture," one in which official church ideology interacted with "pre-Christian (or more accurately, non-Christian) popular culture" of the *illiterati* to create a "'popular Christianity' or 'parish Catholicism'" during the high Middle Ages (5). Yet, rather than trying to confine this claim solely to the high Middle Ages, I use this to apply to Bede's *Historica Ecclesiastica* and the *Mabinogion*, both of which reveal indebtedness to pagan-local folklore. As Gurevich says,

> We find […] an impressive attempt to transform Christian doctrine from the learned heritage of the ecclesiastical elite into the world-view of the broadest strata of the population. It was through these sermons and tales about devils, demons and saints that Christianity, developed in monasteries and hermitages, found its way into the consciousness of the people, who had their own cultural tradition in myth, epic, pagan ritual and magic. In the struggle waged by the church for the minds and souls of the common people, these genres played a crucial part. […] For this very reason, these works could not help but reflect certain significant aspects of folk religiosity and the popular world-view. Preachers, who

[4] I limit my use of "barbarian" simply to a racial tribe or group that exists outside of the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire, governed mainly by its own ethos of warmongering, agriculture and primitive folk religion.

> strove to penetrate the mind of each listener, could achieve this only by adapting to their audiences. (2)

This collective native consciousness, characterized by its refusal to let go of local superstitions and the curious amalgamation of Christian beliefs with pagan practices and traditions, is evident in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the rise of the local cults of saints and kings. The genre of hagiography should not be taken innocently as biographies of people who loved God, but must be seen as inducing a form of spiritual adulation by the masses, alternative to that of earlier Germanic folk religions in Britain. Whereas the pagan gods are first believed to be agents delivering grace to the tribes and popular folks in nature through rain, good weather and even victory in war, the cult of saints and the cult of kings now replace them to suggest their ascendancy as the new gods, beings who may intercede on man's behalf before God within a newfound Christian cosmology (MacMullen, 123; 1997).

Thus, a Christianized hagiolatry is not only shown in the shift in the objects of adulations but their very material representations. Instead of saying that the pagan ethos has been thoroughly dissipated by Christian value systems of repentance before the Christian God (like Augustine's texts), it must be acknowledged that the Germanic barbarian ethos of the warrior which perceives religion as more functional (focused on the here-and-now) than soteriological (concerned with the afterlife) has infiltrated Christian worship. The *commodification of spirituality*, found in saints' relics and material possessions, reliquaries, and the converted kings' bodily fragments and other assorted paraphernalia, attests to the persistence of old pagan habits, of a physical need

for objective expressions of power as opposed to the primal transcendent Spirit that the Christian God is and claims to be in the Scriptures. Faith is transferred from the spiritual presence of God to the objects that represent the presence of these saints and kings when alive. Christianity has become the new magic as a sign of its acculturation by pagan customs. If to a Germanic tribesman in Bede's eighth-century Britain, material benefits like healing from a bout of illness or an exceedingly abundant harvest are easily obtainable via offering prayers at a specific tree or river, the ecclesiastical authorities were less than willing to militate against this. Rather, in the major claims of apostolic succession, bishops and archbishops purported to have the rights to perform divine power passed onto them through historical traditions in church practice, and these displays of power either through people or repositories of their presence thereby became vibrant forms of a syncretic folk religiosity.

As a contrast to the hagiographical tales of Bede's *Historia*, my study of the survival of pagan folk religiosity in the *Mabinogion* centers on the translation of mythopoeic ideas, structures and themes found in Welsh-Celtic folklore and mythology. I particularly emphasize the primary functions played by the Celtic bard-storyteller as a repository of oral culture — arguably the last bastion of Celtic folk religion and its mythopoeic beliefs.[5] Brynley F. Roberts has argued for the Welsh bard-poets' crucial role as original recorders of oral-pagan traditions,

[5] A parallel to this tripartite function-structure in Indo-European mythology and society is the threefold system of caste in Hindu religion, divided between the *Brahmin* (the caste of poets, priests and philosophers), the *Kshatriyas* (the warriors, rulers and those concerned with defense of a state), and the *Shudras* (the working class peasants and laborers). Those who do not fall into these three only become labeled as the Untouchables, the lowest of the lowest.

wherein they (*cyfarwyddiaid*; singular, *cyfarwydd*) represented the "knowledgeable within the society who could advise and instruct according to custom and tradition." The *cyfarwyddiaid*'s inherited body of learning (*cyfar*w*yddyd*) was linked etymologically to "seeing, perception, guidance, knowledge" (2). However, as I argue in the thesis, these various traditional tales' contact with Christian-scribal culture marks a shift whereby the scribe(s), as the mythographer(s) who now painstakingly collates and preserves these traditions, was not however hardbound to them but subjected them to the medieval principle of invention. These scribes thus re-discovered the new meanings these oral-pagan tales could convey allegorically in a medieval-Christian context of storytelling, appropriating the role of the *cyfarwydd* as the ones who guide the narrative development of these traditional tales. No longer the prerogative of pagan storytellers in medieval Wales, these myths and folklore tales-types "became free to become the vehicle for the purposes for which their 'new' authors wished to deploy them" (Roberts, 13), embodying a process of "morphology" (Propp, 71). Foregrounding the bard-storyteller in the *Mabinogion* helps us understand how oral-pagan culture was subsequently redacted under a Christian-scribal culture, and survived under the aegis of a reverence for Wales' literary-cultural heritage.

IV. Their Stories, Told My Way: Conclusion and Limitations of Scope

The thesis' limitations of scope must be highlighted at the outset before I proceed to study the texts proper. These texts' pagan subjects — whether pagan

philosophers and *litterateurs*, or pagan cult practices and their acolytes — obtain their space to speak via mediation by the Christian *ecclesia*, with Augustine's patristic attitudes especially setting the precedent in this study. Mediated via ecclesiastical prejudices, and at times corroborated into the ecclesia's own narratives and sermons on Christian exclusivity and superiority, these remnants of paganisms ironically attest to their re-constructive appropriations by Christians. This will be explored in the next chapter on *Confessiones* where I study the indebtedness of the rhetoric of conversion to pagan literary modes of narration, and pagan philosophico-literary models of self-discovery.

Teo, Chapter 1. From *Peripateia* to *Peregrinatio*: Finding *Katharsis* in Augustine's Pilgrimage of Faiths, and the Discipline of Civic Paganism

Introduction. The Literary Worlds of Augustine: Lived Paganisms

I stated earlier on that my study of Augustine focuses on the extensive influence held by 'pagan' literature over the converted Christian of the academic elite, represented especially by Augustine who was a former professor of rhetoric. Here, I argue that Augustine's *Confessiones* marks an accommodation towards pagan literature by adapting the dramatic-performative functions of *katharsis* to a Christianized end of self-revelation and repentance from one's pagan ways. *Katharsis*, traditionally known in Aristotle's *Poetics* as the "effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions" as pity and fear (4.1), characterizes tragedy's elevated aspect in imitating people "better" (*beltious*) than average (2.2), as opposed to comedy's imitation of people "worse" than average. Although Aristotle's *Poetics* was not known to Latin Antiquity, its ideas remained disseminated through this period via Aristotle's disciple, Theophrastus, a fact highlighted by Henry Ansgar Kelly (1). Augustine's *Confessiones*, a treatise of his conversion to Christianity from early pagan days, therefore derives its thrust from this subsequent afterlife of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Roman pagan dramatic tradition and theory. Donatus in his commentary on Terence's comedies said,

> Many things distinguish comedy from tragedy, especially the fact that comedy involves characters with middling fortunes, dangers of small moment, and actions with happy endings, whereas in tragedy it is just the opposite: imposing persons, great fears, and disastrous endings. Furthermore, in comedy what is turbulent at first becomes tranquil at the end; in tragedy, the action is the reverse. […] tragedy presents the sort of life that one seeks to escape from, whereas the life of comedy is portrayed as desirable. (*Commentum Terenti*, 4.2)

From this perspective, Augustine's rhetoric of conversion marks a move from the "tragic" imperative to the "comic" imperative, according to the Christian perspective of *metanoia* (repentance) in which condemnation in sin is later followed by forsaking it. By dramatizing his life-story as a narrative replete with internal conflicts between the pagan Augustine and the Christian God, where the Christian God triumphs in sovereignty over Augustine's will, the resolution in which *Confessiones* ends reinforces Donatus' dramatic theory of comedy, in affirming the prevalence of a desirable ending from a Christian perspective: final conversion. Augustine — the literary figure of *Confessiones* — specifically affirms this progression (as I argue later). On the one hand, he is initially modeled on the figure of the tragic Classical hero who suffers the required chastisement for his crippling sins (*hamartia*), fatalistically unable to extricate himself from these tragic consequences of self-destruction. However, the autobiographical development of the text also offers the literary antitype to this, namely the Prodigal Son who returns to his Father (God) and repents of his errors — a subsequent figure Augustine evolves into (Luke 15: 11-32). This character development in Augustine turns from a mirroring of the failed hero of Classical tragedy to the redeemed antihero in Christian comedy, antiheroic because God and His servants are the main agents of his conversion. Augustine's *Confessiones* thus reveals this shift through the transformation of his character from a peripatetic figure enamoured with pagan literature and religions — the sins of the past — to a *peregrinatio*, a pilgrim wandering towards God. Encapsulated in medieval terms, this marks the change from a Babylonian pilgrimage to one

towards Jerusalem, of the change from a journey towards pagan self-destruction to Christian salvation.

This conversion of the motives of pagan literature to Christian ends is signified particularly by their being interwoven into Augustine's self-representations in *Confessiones*. Juxtaposing two variant modes of reading, namely that of the pagan *lector* in search of meaning through his own wisdom and the *lectio divina*, Augustine instills in his text a self-reflexive mechanism in which the errors of his pagan days are corrected by his later perspective as a Christian reader. As Brian Stock remarks concerning the ideological ends of such an autobiographical representation of conversion (the forsaking of pagan error),

> A reformed life is a genre of rewriting: its text is the self. *Narratio* is a means to an end. The life in the hearer's mind takes on reality as it is actually lived. However, as story or lived experience, it is also literature; and the catechist, no less than the teacher of grammar or rhetoric, makes use of accepted methods of interpretation, differing from the pagan in the contents of his texts and in his long-range priorities.[…] The Christian teacher discusses truths rather than trifles; and in doing so, he orients his narrative as well as his explanation to nonmaterial ends (Stock, 187).

The representation of Augustine's life-story as a text with its own 'actors' (Augustine included) and also, its attempt at *mimesis*, are interesting facets of Augustine's adaptation of pagan literary strategies of performance, meant to re-affirm the catholicity of Augustine's faith as a Christian and its exclusivist claims.

On the other hand, this autobiographical presentation of a revised pagan past under the aegis of a mediated grand narrative of conversion is meant also for the Christian end of his audience's conversion. These confessions are geared towards producing an affirmation of Christian faith and providence by the redefinition of Augustine's pagan past as a series of past mistakes which they identify with in

grief and fear:

> But many people who know me, and others who do not know me but have heard of me or read my books, wish to hear what I am now, at this moment, as I set down my confessions. […] Charity, which makes them good, tells them that I do not lie about myself when I confess what I am, and it is this charity in them that believes me. (*Confessiones*, X. 3)
>
> Let all who are truly my brothers love in me what they know to be worthy of their love, and let them sorrow to find in me what they know from your teaching to be occasion for remorse. […] my true brothers are those who rejoice for me in their hearts when they find good in me, and grieve for me when they find sin. […] Let them breathe a sigh of joy for what is good in me and a sigh of grief for what is bad. (X. 4)

The traditional patristic critique of pagan literature was based on its mimetic nature, where the audience is made to identify with perfidious, immoral characters by examples. Thus we have Tertullian's admonishments in *De Spectaculis*: "If these tragedies and comedies, bloody and lustful, impious and prodigal, teach outrage and lust, the study of what is cruel or vile is no better than itself. What in action is rejected, is not in word to be accepted" (Chap.17). In the light of Augustine's claims for his confessions' aims which I have highlighted, we see that he has removed himself from Tertullian's traditional Christian-antitheatrical claims, to assert the possibility of his performances edifying a Christian audience or converting a pagan one through empathy. Augustine's *Confessiones* therefore opens itself to public scrutiny as a form of spectacle that can employ originally pagan principles of *katharsis* — the expunging of negative feelings of fear and pity — to produce a deeper affirmation of Christian *veritas*. The readers, following Augustine's hermeneutic rites-of-passage from his 'pagan' ignorance, with its incumbent tendency to imitate earlier literature and philosophies, to his

moments of Christian revelation, are also enlightened by Christian self-knowledge, of the need to repent of a pagan past with its pagan habits, and stirred emotionally to agree with these Augustinian claims of the catholicity of Christian faith.

II. Christian Hermeneutics and the Critique of Mimesis: Identifications and Dis-identifications

Augustine's *Confessions* thus allows for a reader-friendly hermeneutics, a process where the reader is encouraged to evaluate the validity and truth of a worldview, whether pagan or Christian. This process is made possible by opening up a conceptual space between the time narrated and the time of narration, between the 'Augustine' that is spoken of and the 'Augustine' that speaks, so as to demonstrate and reinforce the inherent organizing principle of life-in-writing. That is, the 'life' of 'Augustine' (both the historical and the textual figures) is interpreted by Augustine the exegete 'reading' it as a book, performing and encoding various versions of his life as he rehearses his pagan days as part of a mediated narrative of Christian conversion. This revisionary reading process is a vital part of the process of reproducing a peripatetic life, where Augustine follows detours and byways through the varieties of pagan belief and experiences (Hawkins, 30). As I will argue subsequently, this life of *metanoia* (literally, turning around of one's will) is thus not instantaneous within the plot of the *Confessions*, but is effected by various pivotal events in Augustine's life as a reader.

An early stage in Augustine's life-in-writing within *Confessions* is his being enamored of pagan mythological literature, and its performative dimensions. He not only confesses to his having had an aching desire "to have my ears tickled by the make-believe of the stage" (*Conf.*, I.10), but also constructs his life as an "imitation" of pagan literature (Aristotle, 2):

> I was obliged to memorize the wanderings of a hero named Aeneas, while in the meantime I failed to remember my own erratic ways. I learned to lament the death of Dido, who killed herself for love, while all the time, in the midst of these things, I was dying, separated from you, my God and my Life, and I shed no tears for my own plight. (*Conf.*, I.13)

This empathy with Virgilian characters led Augustine to confuse these shadows with real people, but also initiates a process of critical self-examination in the light of a Christian meta-theatricality. The tragic impulse underlying Dido's suicide out of thwarted love is translated into the tragic figure of Augustine as an unenlightened pagan, literally and spiritually in *digressio* from God's kingdom of truth into the world of fiction. The constructed parallels do not operate solely on the principle of similarity in narrative quality, but rather reveal 'Augustine' the *lectio divina* performing retrospective exegesis on the moral-spiritual ruin of his life as a pagan reader.

Augustine's Christian critique of the ideational structures underlying pagan mythological literature, however, does not solely consist in his dissatisfaction with the aversion from God it manifests. Rather, the pronounced effects of such an aversion from God were equally distressing from a Christian point of view in the questions of exemplarity and *auctoritas* (authority) which they broached. While this sense of *auctoritas* in pagan literature is defined in Classical ethos

simply as "the ability to compel belief" (Minnis, 10), Augustine's Christian exposition lends another dimension of moral-ethical criticism to it. As Augustine observes, "this traditional [pagan] education taught me that Jupiter punishes the wicked with his thunderbolts and yet commits adultery himself. The two roles are quite incompatible" (I. 16). That the amoral nature of the gods portrayed in pagan literature is an aspect capable of impersonation by its readers forms a vital part of Augustine's criticism of pagan literature. The student reading Terence's *Eunuchus* notices an actor's excellent enactment of Jupiter's lascivious behaviour — in his deception of Danae and his rape of her, in the guise of a shower of gold — as excusing away the actor's dissolute behavior on stage. Words of supposed pedagogical value like "'shower', 'golden', 'lap', 'deception', 'sky', and the other words which occur in the same scene" hide sexual filth under the name of necessity "in business and debate," vocations highly esteemed in Roman society (I. 16). The authority of Classical literature, based on its pedagogical worth and rhetorical impressiveness, is juxtaposed with its lack of *moral* authority. The later Augustine associates pagan literature with the aesthetic and the temptation to sin, imposing the judgements of a moral-ethical conscience upon his earlier fascination with pagan literature and mythology in order to correct his pagan past.

III. Emotive Affinities, Philosophia and Recognitions (Anagnoresis) within the Quest for Knowledge

While the dangers of the aesthetic principle in pagan literature are highlighted in its capacity to influence dissolute behaviour in men via *mimesis*, Augustine's recognition of this failing subsequently gives way to his recognition

of another failing in his youth: the yielding to the vain presumptions of pagan philosophic literature. This next stage in Augustine's spiritual itinerary is an infatuation with the pagan philosophy of Cicero. Augustine's discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius*, "whose writing nearly everyone admires, if not the spirit of it" and which won him over with its contents and not its style (III.4), marks a change from preferring literature's ability to entertain to philosophy's claims to deliver truth. The "negative function" of *Hortensius* in igniting his search for truth and wisdom must, however, be noted (Menn, 130). This text is a vital part of Augustine's progression from 'pagan' to 'Christian' reader, paradoxically because of its failure to reveal *sapientia* (wisdom). "*For yours is the wisdom*. In Greek the word 'philosophy' means 'love of wisdom', and it was with this love that the *Hortensius* inflamed me" (III.4). The vain pretensions of the "so-called philosophers" of Cicero's time are denounced in the light of Paul's injunction against the vain deceptions of philosophies which never dwell on Christ: "Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty fantasies drawn from human tradition, from human principles; they were never Christ's teaching" (Col. 2:8). Thus, Augustine's reading of this book marks the beginning of a quest for *sapientia*, one in which pagan philosophy fails simply because it "made no mention of the name of Christ" (III.4; Menn, 185).

Ironically, Augustine's subsequent reluctance to submit to the Christian faith after first reading the Scriptures is a sign of pride, a vain "presumption" towards knowledge which prevents him from converting to Christianity (Menn, 191). At this point of his life, he is still engaged in pagan, aesthetic ways of reading a text,

especially Scripture:

> To me they seemed quite unworthy of comparison with the stately prose of Cicero, because I had too much conceit to accept their simplicity and not enough insight to penetrate their depths. It is surely true that as the child grows these books grow with him. But I was too proud to call myself a child. I was inflated with self-esteem, which made me think myself a great man. (III.5)

The "converted" Augustine here draws attention to his earlier preference for elegant style over Christian substance, a tendency of an unregenerate pagan. As a pagan reader, Augustine is caught up and entangled in the shackles of a literalistic mode of reading, unable to read beyond the letter to perceive the workings of the spirit — metaphor and allegory. This carnal habit of mind restricts him solely to reading for the sake of aesthetic pleasure, with the elevation of sensual pleasures above spiritual education. The later Augustine depicts himself as having suffered from the debilitating mentality that Paul associated with Jews and pagans who cannot see the light of the gospel but constantly choose to reject His Lordship and Deity. The Jews and pagans' rejection of a Christian reading of the Old Testament reflects this carnal and literal mentality, "for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The prevalence of this debilitating mode of reading, is seen in the passage's allusions to the Gospels:

> Jesus answered and said unto him [Nicodemus], Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born […] That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3: 3-4, 6-7, own insertion in parentheses)
>
> And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become little

> children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18: 3-4)

Christ himself confounds the logic of the reader — the pagan and the resisting Jew — with this vital paradox of being "born again" and becoming like a child, which in biological terms cannot be possible. In the domain of Biblical exegesis, however, this becomes possible for both the 'reader' and the teacher on the level of allegory. The conversion of the reader from a 'fleshly' pagan reader to a *lectio divina* marks the birth of a new sense of self-consciousness, a *remembering* of oneself in relation to God as master-author and also a re-membering of oneself. As Roman Coles says, "the point at which the self begins a new mode of being, whose essence is precisely the ability to free oneself from the causality of unconscious habit and *begin*" (47). This describes the process Augustine goes through in his conversion, and affirms the exegetical-allegorical application to which the words "born again" and "become little children" are put in these passages. The polarity between flesh and spirit is configured as a vital element in the process of Augustine's movement from pagan apprehensions of the *sacris* (the *visio Dei*) to Christian belief, where he must first be stirred towards a humbling of his own fleshly impulses of reading, and subjecting them to the higher authority of spirit as a mode of reading.

Augustine's initiation into a community of readers, where a love for knowledge and wisdom is purportedly shared under the aegis of friendship (*amicitia*), is also another phase of this progression from a 'pagan' fleshly mode of reading to a spiritualized one (Stock, 47). The Manicheans occupy a central

role in this process as the false community that first entrapped Augustine in their habits of interpretation. Their synthesis of pagan Gnostic tendencies, which stress the individual's ability to experience *gnosis* (a state of privileged knowledge) by abstinence from certain 'evils' such as sex, bodily pleasure and gluttony for food, with their claims of "scriptural foundations" proved attractive to the mind of a young Augustine hungry for truth (Stock, 45). Brian Stock has commented on the organization of this syncretic sect in which "canonical texts were known only to the higher ranks of the hierarchy" and "were not divulged in public." *Auditores* like Augustine were not "given free access to the sacred texts of his chosen faith, nor was he encouraged to read them critically" (Stock, 46). Taught simply on the grounds of the *electi*'s authority to believe in what they presume, Augustine has to accept the verity of what is preached without any recourse to reason or understanding:

> But while my hunger was for you, for Truth itself, these were the dishes on which they served me up the sun and the moon, beautiful works of yours but still only your works, not you yourself nor even the greatest of your created things. […] But my hunger and thirst were not even for the greatest of your works, but for you, my God, because you are Truth itself with whom there can be no change, no swerving from your course. Yet the dishes they set before me were still loaded with dazzling fantasies, illusions with which the eye deceives the mind. (III.6)

The confession that is set up here between a younger Augustine who submits credulously to the shackles of the Manichean mode of perception, and an Augustine disillusioned with its inherent deceptions, reveals the self-reflexive performance of Augustine's process of conversion, a journey towards the One *veritas*. Like the pagans, the Manicheans — in their habits of presumption — chose to worship the sun and the moon, mere created things. Not only did this fly

in the face of their profession of faith in the God of the New Testament, wherein they uttered the names of the Trinity (III.6). Also, the complicity with which Augustine engaged as a reader in the community itself created in him false habits of reading and false conceptual frameworks for understanding the nature of God and of Christ. The metaphor of ingestion and eating that Augustine uses here to describe his former experiences as an auditor and sympathetic reader with the Manicheans, who occupy a neither region between pagan Gnostic knowledge and heretical interpretations of Christianity, is a veiled allusion to the common Antique philosophical conception of wisdom and philosophy as a banquet for the philosopher, popular especially among the Neoplatonists. Yet the experience is shown as nothing but empty sham, addressed specifically by Augustine as "vomit" which he "ought to have disgorged" from his "over-laden system" (VII.2). Like the prisoners in Plato's cave, the Manichean Augustine was caught up with the play of the senses, so that he could not see beyond the shadows in the cave, nor go out of the cave to perceive the sun, the representative symbol of the One Truth (Cary, 18).

Given this influence, it is not surprising that Augustine's conception of God was diverted into an aberrant Christology. The Nicene Creed defined orthodoxy by its insistence on the historical Incarnation of God, Christ's pre-existence as the *logos* (Word), His authority over death through His Crucifixion and Resurrection, but also, on God's *primordial* nature as Spirit (online source). This creed's influence on Augustine's Christology cannot thus be underestimated. As a byroad that Augustine took prior to his eventual conversion to the Catholic faith, which

involves an unconditional acceptance of the plenary inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments by God, the aberrant Christology that Augustine was entrapped in as a pagan reader marks a point of crisis in his engagement with pagan error that is mediated only by divine grace. As he confesses:

> I also thought of our Saviour, your only Son, as somehow extended or projected for our salvation from the mass of your transplendent body, and I was so convinced of this that I could believe nothing about him except such futile dreams as I could picture to myself. I did not believe that a nature such as his could have taken birth from the Virgin Mary unless it were mingled with her flesh; and if it were such as I imagined it to be, I could not see how it could be mingled with her flesh without being defiled. So I dared not believe in his incarnation, for fear that I should be compelled to believe that the flesh had defiled him. (V.10)

At this low point of his pagan errors, Augustine rejected Nicene orthodoxy by assigning corporeality to God. He also denied the miraculous ability of spirit to triumph over the frailties of flesh, downplaying the authoritative event of Christ's Incarnation and His sinless nature by thinking in terms of a dualistic mode of 'impure' flesh mixing with 'pure' being that emanates from God — a hallmark of Gnostic belief.[6] This literal mode of reading has serious repercussions for Augustine in his subsequent apprehensions of the *sacris*, where his understanding of God is thus characterized by caricature upon caricature of Nicene orthodoxy. Here, the pagan Augustine is shown imagining God as a

> great being with dimensions extending everywhere, through infinite space, permeating the whole mass of the world and reaching in all directions beyond it without limit, so that the earth and the sky and the creation were full of you and their limits were within you, while you had no limits at all (VII.1).

[6] Gnostics believed in the emanation of the Logos as an *aeon* from God who is the *pleroma*, the life-sustaining energy of all things, which in a crucial sense, would have denied the consubstantiality of Christ the Son with God the Father as one God-Being, thus giving Him the status of a created being.

Enmeshed in the web of deceptions fostered by his Manichean habits of reading, which expresses all things of the spirit in terms of flesh and physical matter, Augustine needs prevenient grace, to restore him to the state of proto-Nicene orthodoxy. This avenue of obtaining wisdom in the *Confessions* is in the gift of the Teacher (God) — which, I argue, is manifestly found in a Teacher within and a Teacher who works through a human agent. This dual manifestation of the presence of a Teacher to guide the soul from pagan error to Christian truth is a vital part of the orthodox Christian conception of the Holy Spirit, which works within the human heart to convict a person of sin, and uses human agents to speak to the one It chooses.

Ambrose, whom Augustine meets in Milan, enacts this pivotal role as the Teacher to guide Augustine out of his 'pagan' habits of (mis)reading. Ambrose's mode of preaching and reading of the Bible, *allegoresis*, becomes an influential model which opens up the eyes of his heart, by teaching Augustine to read beyond the 'letter'. The desire for wisdom (*sapientia*) that Augustine expected to be filled by Manicheans' *scientia* is instead filled by the allegorical-spiritual method of Ambrose's preaching, thus substituting cornucopia for filth: "At that time his gifted tongue never tired of dispensing the richness of your corn, the joy of your oil, and the sober intoxication of your wine. Unknown to me, it was you who led me to him, so that I might knowingly be led by him to you" (V.13).

To note that Augustine's desire for true wisdom was answered in Ambrose the external Teacher, God's human agent, is not to assume that Augustine's journey as a reader from 'pagan' to *lectio divina* is however completed. Rather, in

the true spirit of prevenient grace, the supererogatory basis upon which *caritas* (love) unveils itself and works in the soul to deliver it from pagan error into a community of Christian believers, naturally becomes the next step in Augustine's eventual abandonment of his 'pagan habit' of reading things through the flesh and the letter. This conforms to the Biblical mold offered in the Johannine epistles, thus confirming God's authority to command a person's obedience to give up his pagan ways. As Augustine suggests it in the *Confessiones*: "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). The laborious process of Augustine's final and definitive conversion to Christianity is therefore effected through the illumination that God works within him as the "inner master who teaches"(Rist, 78), while Augustine still continues to contemplate the feasibility of the Neoplatonists' philosophical ideas as means to experiencing the *beata vita* (blessed life) of vision and understanding (Rist, 77). These ideas thus served a "crucial negative function" (Menn, 130) in providing the avenue for Augustine's movement from a 'carnal' reader to a 'spiritual' reader, just as Cicero's *Hortensius* provoked the innate desire for *sapientia* without being able to satisfy it**.**. Augustine's Neoplatonist step to his final Christian conversion is comparable to a rung on the ladder of ascent to the life of Christian beatitude which Augustine's God paradoxically allows, despite its pagan nature, to first elevate him beyond the realm of the senses' apprehension of the sacred. As the reflexive Augustine remarks, his earlier reading of "some of the books of the Platonists, translated from the Greek into Latin" (VII.9), which he gained access to from a pagan "bloated with the most outrageous pride" in human philosophy (VII.9),

paradoxically produced a call to introspection, which opened up his mind to the nature of God as the True Wisdom. Rist affirms the pivotal role played by this introspection in saying that,

> Augustine's idea that God is within us implies that one's inward eye is not merely looking at oneself as an object, and thus creating an image: it is also looking at something independent of the self, namely God, an ever present object which will always 'resist' human misrepresentation (89).

The nature of the beatific vision that the younger Augustine received from these texts of pagan (Neo-)Platonic philosophy reinforces this transition from reading through the 'flesh' to reading through the 'spirit'. God is no longer apprehended through the same corporeal images that Augustine used in his Manichean days; rather, the metaphor of light is used this time to denote the nature of God as revelation:

> I saw the Light that never changes casting its rays over the same eye of the soul, over my mind. It was not the common light of day that is seen by the eye of every living thing of flesh and blood, nor was it some more spacious light of the same sort, as if the light of day were to shine far, far brighter than it does and fill all space with a bright brilliance. […] It shone above my mind, but not in the way that oil floats above water or the sky hangs over the earth. It was above me because it was itself the Light that made me, and I was below it because I was made by it. All who know the truth know this Light, and all who know this Light know eternity. (VII.10)

This Light that Augustine perceived as the *visio Dei* in a pre-Christian, pagan moment of reading is now freed of the contamination of the sensual mode of apprehension, where the common sense of sight (comparable degree of brightness according to the eye), and the common mode of perceiving "above" as geographical-astronomical *topoi*, are rejected as valid means of understanding this

illumination. The passage becomes Augustine's retrospective voicing of his pre-Christian *intimidation* of the Christian *visio Dei*, one which echoes the mystical Christian *topoi* of John in his description of the Logos-Christ (Rist, 86):

> That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world knew him not. […] But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:9-10, 12).[7]

This Neo-Platonic emphasis on the notion of illumination by the True Light (God) signals the movement of Augustine's faith — even in his pre-conversion state — towards the metaphysical realm where God resides, thus paving the way for him reading through the spirit instead of the flesh. While the books of the Platonists form a crucial stage in Augustine's hermeneutic rites-of-passage, the final conclusive step in sealing Augustine's conversion to orthodox Christianity is the (re-)direction of his reading from 'pagan' philosophical texts back to the Bible, which conveys the wisdom of God under the workings of prevenient grace.

IV. The Katharsis of "Augustine": Purgation Through Tears and Repentance

So far, I have commented on Augustine's latter critiques of his emotive and intellectual affinities with pagan literature and the Manichaens' syncretic-pagan philosophies as part of his rhetoric of conversion, where he defines his 'pagan' past as a series of slippages which require divine grace to turn it back to the road to truth. Here, one of the final conclusive moments of *agon* (struggle) towards

[7] Also see, Arthur Lindley, *Hyperion and the Hobby-Horse* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), p.34. The argument that Augustine's God is an Unironicized Ironist, incorporating contradictory opposites into his plan for mankind, is also a salient point that reinforces my argument of intentional detours, byroads, and occasional right directions in Augustine's life-in-writing.

conversion must be brought to attention as an instance of how Augustine mediates these various pagan moments in his life as steps upon an ultimate Christian pilgrimage towards God, and as proofs of the superiority of Christian claims of grace and catholic knowledge. Augustine's retreat to a quiet garden beside his abode in Milan. Here, we see a mature Augustine actively assimilating the ethical and psychological imperatives of the pagan philosophies which he has been exposed to, where possible, and adapting them to Christian ends of revelation and self-disclosure. As one case in point, the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* (apathy or indifference) has emphasized the ability of the self to arrive at peace of mind through the recognition that "every emotion is an act of will"(Sorabji, 382). Hence, philosophical exercises are conducted either for the aim of "preparing [the acolyte] in advance to avoid emotion" in the "prospective" sense, or to "calm emotions when they have arisen" in the "retrospective" sense (Sorabji, 212) — the purposes of which echo the fundamental aim of ancient philosophy to 'know thyself'. The agitation that Ponticianus' story of his friend's a sudden decision to become a desert ascetic after reading the story of Saint Antony provokes in Augustine leads to his retrospective exercise in the garden where he attempts to resolve the "tumult" in his breast till "it came to its conclusion" (VIII. 8). As a philosophical-psychotherapeutic exercise practiced interchangeably in pagan philosophical schools, especially the Stoic and Platonic schools of contemplation, the discoveries of himself that Augustine makes as a pagan are noteworthy points of study:

> The mind commands the body to move and is so readily obeyed that the order can scarcely be distinguished from its execution. Yet the mind is

> mind and the hand is part of the body. But when the mind commands the mind to make an act of will, these two are one and the same and yet the order is not obeyed. […] The reason, then, why the command is not obeyed is that it is given with the full will. (VIII. 9)
>
> The same is true when the higher part of our nature aspires after eternal bliss while our lower self is held back by the love of temporal pleasure. It is the same soul that wills both, but it wills neither of them with the full force of the will. So it is wrenched in two and suffers great trials, because while truth teaches it to prefer one course, habit prevents it from relinquishing the other. (VIII. 10)

Here, Augustine's arrival at the theory of two divided wills which are not full in their force of decision is surprising. Where he first starts with the Stoic motive of contemplation for the sake of arriving at *apatheia*, based on the eradication of the emotion via a unitary will, he subsequently anticipates the Christian notion of the dichotomy between a 'carnal' and a 'spiritual' will responsible for his inner conflict — "a very un-Stoic idea" (Sorabji, 399) which he turns to believe in.

The use of tears as a vital element of this scene must also be studied here as an aspect of Augustine's adaptation of Aristotle's theory of purgation of negative emotions of emotions to a Christian end. Unable to surmount the problem of a carnal will, Augustine succumbs to the use of tears as a part of his exercise:

> I probed the hidden depths of my soul and wrung its pitiful secrets from it, and when I mustered them all before the eyes of my heart, a great storm broke within me, bringing with it a great deluge of tears. […] Somehow I flung myself down beneath a fig tree and gave way to the tears which now streamed from my eyes, the sacrifice which is acceptable to you. (VIII. 12)[8]

[8] While this passage may be read as a Christian echo of Psalm 51, where the Psalmist states that the "sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:/ A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," I beg to differ. The context in which the tears are wrought about involves a philosophical meditation on one's will as divided between the 'carnal' will and the 'spiritual' will, and instead affirms a Neo-Platonic context where Augustine is frustratingly caught up still in the will to remain in his own Cave of shadows — his false beliefs and lusts.

In a moment of *katharsis*, complete with tears, pain and fear, Augustine comes face-to-face with his sins via the mode of confession, a technique shared ironically even amongst pagan philosophers. The agonistic spectacle that Augustine opens up via this scene of self-imposed solitude has barely replaced the pagan theatrical and rhetorical spectacles which impressed the young Augustine in his childhood days, by adapting them to the Christian end of repentance. Whereas the 'beautiful' speeches of the rhetorician delivering Virgil's poetry on the Fall of Troy and Dido's tragic death used to be a stimulus to Augustine's tears of identification in childhood, Augustine's tears of despair now become a means of realizing his inadequacies in knowing himself. At the core of this *agon* is a rehearsal of Aristotle's formula that we love to watch pain simply because it is pleasurable for us the audience: "we take delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them (e.g. the shapes of the lowest species of animal, and corpses)" (*Poetics*, 3.I). While an affirmation that pagan literature dies hard even in the minds of converted Christians simply for the virtue of its alikeness to reality, this painful spectacle has now been transformed from the empty emotional pleasures of a pagan spectacle into the drama of the Christian's self-recognition of his *hamartia*.

The last step in this scene of confessional solitude in the garden, namely the voice heard in the garden, constitutes the final thrust in Augustine's attempt to provide the transitional bridge from a 'pagan' mode of 'carnal' apprehension to a Christian mode of seeing things in the 'spirit' in the rhetoric of conversion. The voice of a child that he hears in the garden admonishing him, "Take and read, take

and read" (VIII.12), although not known in identity or gender, becomes the *return* to the initial admonishment to become as a child again and to be converted that Augustine refuses in his youthful, carnal reading of the Bible, which springs from a pagan pride in one's own achievements. Ramsay McMullen has, however, remarked on the uncanny quality of this episode which involves Augustine resorting to "divination through little events that signaled the operation of some superhuman agency," while combining "the guidance of what he had heard with scriptural lots, modeled on the pagan *sortes* but using a copy of the Bible instead of Vergil" (139). Akin to the voice of the Delphic oracle, which is responsible in the Greek and Roman plays for pronouncing judgement upon the sinners and *hamartia* of the 'tragic' heroes, this voice of revelation becomes the 'new' voice of Augustine's *katharsis*, where all his feelings of inadequacy to arrive at truth are finally expunged through what he interprets as a divine 'Christian' voice. His obedience to this command, as one of divine origins, becomes the decisive step in his discarding of the prideful ways of his pagan days to embark upon a Christian journey of reading, this time with his attention directed to the Bible as a *lectio divina*. As an act of pagan resonance in its resort to the pagan *sortes*, its unfolding in Augustine's final decision to convert heightens the role of Christianity as the new '*philosophia*', in place of the pagan Classics.

Augustine's personal drama of salvation as played out in *Confessions* through the interaction between the time of narration and the time narrated, between the Augustine that was and the Augustine that is, thus consists in transcending the tragic impulse of pagan epic literature, to arrive at its epiphanic

version of a Christian comedy of divine intervention and grace. As such, it acts both as a denial of pagan claims to individual authority and knowing any wisdom outside of God, since any arrival at truth is — according to Augustine — a product of God's providential will, and thereby as an affirmation of an anti-heroic 'literary' impulse. In using retrospection to structure his pagan past under the aegis of Christian confession, Augustine, however, concedes subconsciously the primacy of the pagan performative ethos of *mimesis* and *katharsis*, adapting it to the Christian end of affirming catholicity of faith. In the next two chapters, we will focus on how this ransacking from the pagan Classics benefited Augustine in both his use of the *ars rhetorica* in preaching, and also his apologetics on the role of pagan *historia* in God's divine eschatology.

Teo, Chapter 2. The Rhetor's New Clothes: *Ars Praedicandi* and the Adaptations of Classical Rhetoric

I. Spoiling the Egyptians: The Christian Prerogative to Use Pagan Knowledge

In this second part of my study of Augustine's range of attitudes to pagan culture and beliefs, I focus on another aspect of Augustine's writing, namely the meta-critical enterprise of rhetoric in *De Doctrina Christiana*, with the focus on later parts of Book III and Book IV, and its relations to Christian hermeneutics. *De Doctrina Christiana*'s process of composition was discontinuous, with the first three books occupying the period between 396 to 397 AD during Augustine's bishopric at Hippo, and the remainder of Book III and Book IV added only after 427 AD, thus suggesting Augustine's evolving views on rhetoric. David Tracy has argued contrastively that the text "constitutes a coherent whole, thereby disclosing whatever we can learn of Augustine's rhetorical theory, as it explicitly discloses his most basic position on both biblical hermeneutics and on the hermeneutical relation of theology and culture" (259). Although I do not agree that Augustine formulated a systematic theory about rhetoric, I would concede that Augustine did advocate the usefulness of rhetoric — an aspect of pagan Classical culture — for expounding Christian-scriptural Truth. Tracy's view also holds the valid assumption that Augustine found himself situated in the writing of *De Doctrina Christiana* at the crossroads between pagan-Classical models of persuasion (itself a form of *auctoritas*), and Christian-Biblical claims to hegemony and dominance of truth. Rather than understanding this dilemma as a case of "either-or," it would become a case of "both-and" where Augustine attempts to discover the fruitfulness of pagan rhetoric and knowledge for

Christian methods of exegesis and preaching, of unraveling encoded truth in the Bible and of delivering truth derived from it (Brown, 1998; 25). I argue here, with regards to the question of pagan culture and thought posed to Augustine, that *De Doctrina Christiana*'s function as a catechetical manual for the instruction of baptismal candidates in the dynamics of Biblical exegesis and preaching, is derived from the recognition of pagan-Classical rhetoric's malleability. Augustine thus argues Christian hermeneutics to be inherently indebted to Classical rhetoric and assuming a line of continuity from it, in his emphasis upon one's "style" of speaking (Marshall, 281).

To assert that Augustine's model of Christian hermeneutics posits pagan rhetoric's usefulness for the Christian soul's quest in search of truth, we must first turn to the essential motif of "taking the gold out of Egypt" which Augustine adapts to his purpose in *De Doctrina Christiana*. The episode of the Israelites' exodus from the land of Egypt, the land of their pagan oppressors, is here appropriated by Augustine to effect an allegorical reading. For just as

> the Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to a better use. They did not do this on their own authority but at God's commandment, while the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with things which themselves did not use well. (*DDC*, Book Two, XL)

For Augustine, this jubilant episode in the Old Testament is not only a literal sign of God's sovereignty in human history, where He rescues the Israelites out of a land mired in its pagan worship and beliefs, but also occupies a figurative level as a sign representing the equivocal nature of pagan knowledge. While the pagans'

teachings may constitute a mixture of superstitions and grave burdens, which require unnecessary service from the acolyte himself, there is also the legacy of "liberal disciplines" (XL) which are "more suited to the uses of truth" (XL). To Augustine, the gold and silver that the Israelites literally have borne out of Egypt thus becomes figurations of the "gold," precious precepts of truth, which early Christian preachers and contemporaries, the new Israelites, have gleaned out of the pagans' legacy. While Augustine admits that these precepts have been "perversely and injuriously abused in the worship of demons"(XL), in a reference to the Greek philosophers' tendency to pay obeisance to *daimones*, demonic spirits which philosophers — especially the Platonists — argue to be mediators between the gods and men, he cites a list of precedents for the truths borne out of pagan thought systems as examples to reinforce his stand for a positive use of pagan philosophy. As Augustine states,

> May we not see with how much gold and silver and clothing bundled up the most sweet teacher and most blessed martyr Cyprian fled from Egypt? Or how much Lactantius took with him? Or how much Victorinus, Optatus, Hilary carried with them, not to speak of those still living? Or how much innumerable Greeks have taken? This was done first by that most faithful servant of God, Moses, of whom it is written that he "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." (XL)

Augustine plucks the "theft imagery" (Tracy, 270) from Israel's encounter with the Egyptians' polytheistic culture, reading it as a pre-figuration of the Christian's — the new Israelites — new ownership over the pagan classics and liberal arts. While the Israelites in the Old Testament ransacked the Egyptians' gold as their ransom from captivity, this literal theft points proleptically to early Christians like Lactantius and Cyprian who conscientiously derived useful principles out of their

Classical learning in rhetoric for their preaching — a metaphorical theft. This defense of the possible uses of rhetoric therefore reveals at its core a deep-seated indebtedness and desire to accommodate pagan philosophy and culture despite its proclivities towards fostering erroneous ways like worship of demons.

Augustine's reading of this motif of "taking the gold out of Egypt" as a pre-figuration of Christian appropriation of pagan wisdom is also matched by an anxiety to answer his pagan critics, and to forge a defense for Christian belief as the superior wisdom based on a recourse to Biblical authority (*auctoritas*), *auctoritas* being the ability to compel belief (Minnis, 10). Unlike the pagans, whom Augustine would subsequently characterize as a group which always questions the basis for Christian belief, regarding it as foolish to simply believe on grounds of appeal to Biblical authority, Augustine instead arrives at a radically distinct paradigm, that "we must first believe, before we seek to know" (Matthews, 146). This preference of Biblical authority over pagan systems of wisdom is particularly broached in his reading of the origins of philosophy, a notable attempt to refute pagans' marshalling of chronological history — authoritative knowledge — as a tool against Christian claims to superiority of wisdom. The "calumnies of the readers and admirers of Plato" had held that "all the lessons of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they were forced to admire and to teach, were learned from the writings of Plato" (Book II, XXVIII. 43). By contrast, Augustine makes recourse to the claims of Ambrose, an early church Father who made an impact on him both prior to his conversion and after, that "Plato had probably been introduced to [Judeo-Christian] literature by Jeremias so

that he was able to teach or to write doctrines that are justly commended" (XXVIII. 43). In doing so, Augustine presents an alternative to the pagans' claim that Pythagoras's disciples taught Plato philosophy. Following patristic tradition which asserts that the Judeo-Christian wisdom of the Bible influenced the wisdom of pagan philosophers, Augustine thus re-aligns Christian knowledge as part of a historical continuum — foreshadowed in the wisdom of the Jews in the Old Testament, and yet also the fruition of Classical culture's aspirations for self-improvement.

II. Concerning Idolatry: The Servitude to Signs, and Fashioning Bipolar Communities

Augustine's understanding of the value of pagan rhetoric and literature is therefore twofold, that they can be adapted to Christian ends, and yet also that the Christian who is taught to aspire towards the status of *lectio divina* (a reader of sacred scripture) must place Christian belief above all else. Augustine thus arrives at a reader-centered hermeneutics — a delineation of the means through which one can approach signs (*signa*) and use them to understand the things (*res*) they represent. This reader-centered hermeneutics becomes the source in which the distinction between the 'pagan' reader and the *lectio divina* is borne out. As *De Doctrina Christiana* illustrates, the problems surrounding referentiality in language, and its sacramental quality as a code of communication which binds groups together in systems of beliefs, are tied to the vital questions of Christian liberty and reading. On the one hand, the pagans' errors in reading 'signs'

manifests themselves as forms of idolatry, where signs are mistaken for the things that they are supposed to represent. As Augustine claims, this constitutes a "miserable servitude of the spirit" in which "one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal light" (Book III, V. 9), an allusion to Plato's analogy of the man trapped in the cave, unable to look out to the sun's rays for illumination.

Augustine himself further draws the attention to the danger of reading signs and statements too literally which pagans are guilty of: "We must not listen to the superstition of the pagans who professed that the nine Muses are the daughters of Jove and Memory" (Book II, XVII. 27). In allusion to Varro, a pagan *auctore*, Augustine reveals the pagans' canonizing of the nine Muses as Jove's daughters to be an accident based on human caprice. A city, contracted with three sculptors for triple statues of the Muses to be placed as offerings in the temple of Apollo on the condition that the artist who wrought the most beautiful statues would be enlisted in service, perceived all nine to be of equal beauty and thus had all nine dedicated. This substitution of the letter for the spirit, attempting to read the spiritual through carnal perspectives, is a mode of reading that Augustine warns against in an assertion of how a Christian is to react to such idolatry, allusive to Paul himself in Romans 1:21-23:

> every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's. And confessing and acknowledging this truth also in the sacred writings, he will repudiate superstitious imaginings and will deplore and guard against men who "when they knew God…have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the

> incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things."

In the understanding that "the anthropomorphism common to pagan idols seduced the multitude because idols that resembled living bodies seemed capable of housing an invisible *numen*" (living life-force), Augustine therefore targets his critique at pagans' habits of reading and interpretation (Ando, 29). The *numen* (or life-force) which the pagan apologist may claim that the idol points to constitutes for Augustine an outright reason for rejection of it as blasphemy, since it is based upon the use of *empty* metaphors. Here, these metaphors are divested of their reference to the Christian God, constituting a form of slavery to carnal signs, since they demand devotion from the carnal believers:

> Of what use is it to me, for example, if Neptune is not taken as a god but as a sign of all the sea, or indeed, of all other waters that rise from fountains? He is described by one of their poets, if I remember correctly, in the following verses:
>
> > O Father Neptune, whose aged temples resound,
> > Wreathed in the noisy sea, from whose beard eternally flows
> > The vast ocean, and in whose hair the rivers wander….
>
> This husk shakes sounding pebbles inside its sweet shell, but it is not food for men but for swine. […] But I admit that those who think the works of men are gods have sunk lower than those who deify the works of God. […] If it is a carnal slavery to adhere to a usefully instituted sign instead of to the thing it was designed to signify, how much is it a worse slavery to embrace signs instituted for spiritually useless things instead of the things themselves? (Book III, VII. 11)

Juxtaposing the appeal of figurative expressions used by pagans in defense of their polytheism, in pleasant-sounding words like "sounding pebbles" and "sweet shell," with their emptiness of content, devoid of reference to God, Augustine

thus formulates a vital distinction between the chaff (exterior) and the wheat (interior), a distinction also seminal to his methods of Biblical exegesis.

This assertion that the pagans are slavishly attached to the worship of signs of created things, itself a twice mistaken act in ignoring God the un-created Being and devoting attention not to the *useful signs* of God but to *useless signs*, must on the other hand be contrasted with the liberty which Augustine finds in the early Christian churches. The Christian mode of reading through the spirit marks liberty, for these early churches not only "prohibited and destroyed all servile obligation to those signs, but also destroyed the signs themselves" so that the converted pagans would be drawn to the worship of the one God (Book III, VIII. 12). This true conversion was not only an external profession of faith, in the removal of idols, but also was marked in the internal change of the born-again Christians: no longer led to servitude under either useless or useful signs, they were at the same time led to "an exercise of the mind directed toward understanding them spiritually" (VIII. 12). By contrasting differing modes of perception towards figurative expressions between pagans and Christians, Augustine therefore foregrounds in *De Doctrina Christiana* the hermeneutical problems of belief and (mis)understanding inherent in rhetoric itself, especially when it is deployed in the sphere of religious worship. This foregrounding of hermeneutical problems of shared beliefs and (mis)understanding between pagans creates a bipolar distinction between them as people who have been deceived into the devil's company without their knowing it, and the Christians who alternatively know the true Word of God, and the right way to approach signs created by God.

III. Caritas Exalteth and Buildeth Up: The Living Principle of the Ars Praedicandi, Ethical Distinctives and Imperatives

We have seen how Augustine perceives in pagan idolatry a principle of false belief, itself a form of *cupiditas* (pride), to be the *raison d'etre* which organizes the pagans into a community in bondage to sin. This, as he argues, is shown through a wrongheaded worship of the sign without understanding the True *res* that underpins all signs (God). By contrast, the true worship of the Christian God is marked by an application of the governing principle of *caritas* (charity or love) to the rhetorical enterprise. This section of my chapter makes a case for Augustine's conscious adaptation of the performative dimensions of the Classical *ars rhetorica* to the ethical-moral distinctives — especially *caritas* — of Christian theology, manifested finally in the *ars praedicandi* (art of preaching) which is used by the exegete-preacher of Christian Scripture. While it is a truth to Augustine that the person who reads with a sole regard for the aesthetic is prevented from seeing the *res* represented, this caution against a sole regard for the aesthetic is also extended by him to the problems of *eloquentia* and the production of written and spoken texts in line with this Classical imperative.

Claire M. Waters has highlighted the ambivalence with which medieval Christian preachers viewed rhetoric and its emphasis on *eloquentia* (speaking beautifully), where even though they "recognized rhetoric as an inherent and necessary element of their activity, they were also heirs to a patristic suspicion of its pagan roots, its moral neutrality, and especially its potential to emphasize the letter over the spirit, medium over message"(online source). In *De Doctrina*

Christiana, this statement qualifies a patristic anxiety on Augustine's part, where he takes immense effort to defend the use of rhetoric for the preacher's intention of exciting his audience to acts in service of Christian truth:

> Should they oppose the truth with fallacious arguments and assert falsehoods, while the defenders of truth have no ability either to defend the truth or to oppose the false? Should they, urging the minds of their listeners into error, ardently exhort them, moving them by speech so that they terrify, sadden, and exhilarate them, while the defenders of truth are sluggish, cold, and somnolent? […] While the faculty of eloquence, which is of great value in urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in the service of truth if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defense of iniquity and error? (Book IV, II. 3)

Augustine's defense of rhetoric is a careful one, where he distinguishes between the people who oppose the truth with it — the pagan detractors of Christianity — and the "defenders of truth," the Christian apologists. Whereas rhetoric is morally neutral as he agrees in its "indifferent" nature, it is the motive(s) of the speaker using it which can either ennoble it as a tool for advancing truth or pervert it. This understanding that rhetoric and the practice of *eloquentia* attached to it are a double-edged sword thus reinforces the need for the preacher to use rhetoric for the end of *caritas*, to affirm and produce "the love of God and of one's neighbour" (Book III, X.14) in his audience.

The idea of an eloquence that abounds for its own sake is a criticism of the pagans which Augustine uses to justify the use of rhetoric in the *ars praedicandi*. A qualifiable degree of veneration for pagan *auctores* who have made a case for the precedence of wisdom over eloquence, and subsequently a right use of eloquence to affirm wisdom, is however noticeable here in the allusion to

Cicero's influential model of *inventio* (discovery) with regards to rhetoric, thus reinforcing Augustine's conscious use of Classical models of rhetoric for Christian ends of Biblical exposition:

> This lesson, moreover, did not escape those who thought to teach the art of rhetoric. They granted that "wisdom without eloquence is of small benefit to states; but eloquence without wisdom is often extremely injurious and profits no one." If those who taught the rules of eloquence, in the very books in which they did so, were forced by the power of truth to confess this, being ignorant of that true wisdom which descends supernal from the Father of Lights, how much more ought we, who are the sons and ministers of this wisdom, to think in no other way? (Book IV, V. 7)

While acknowledging the problem where "those who write with regard for eloquence alone inevitably produce essentially meaningless, self-referential texts," unable to benefit anyone (Knauss, online source), Augustine assigns to Cicero the pagan *auctore* the primary role of a *virtuous* pagan who taught the rules of eloquence well in being compelled to confess the inadequacies of an eloquence-for-eloquence's sake. Put in the words of Carol Harrison, "Augustine moves rapidly between acceptance, rejection and modification of classical eloquence" (217). This vacillating stance towards Classical culture and its representative figures, especially in the pagan *auctores* like Cicero who advocate the right self-informed use of rhetoric, marks for Augustine a subtle recognition that Classical culture has a potential which can be tapped into for the Christian preacher's didactic purposes.

This calculated effort to justify the Christian Scriptures and the preaching that flows from them as *rhetorical* and in line with pagan rhetorical tradition is shown further in Augustine's covert apologia for the eloquence of Christian

authors later on. Augustine submits Biblical passages to a technical exercise in which they are "analyzed according to the rules of classical 'eloquence'" (Harrison, 217), an indication of his background as an educated rhetor concerned with proving Christian Scriptures' 'eloquence'. His concern marks an awareness of his carnal-pagan critics' attacks at the Scriptures for a lack of eloquence, which borders possibly on "embarrassment"(Harrison, 218). Passages from 2 Corinthians (VII. 13), Romans (VII. 11) and Amos (VII. 16) are "subjected to a thoroughly classical critique, in terms of *caesa*, *membra* and *circuitus*; their ornaments, figures and expressions are detailed, as it were, to show their pedigree" (Harrison, 217). On another occasion, Augustine also attempts to re-contextualize the claims that had been made of the vulgarisms and barbarisms in the Bible: "And the obscurity itself of the divine and wholesome writings was a part of a kind of eloquence through which our understandings should be benefited not only by the discovery of what lies hidden but also by exercise" (VI. 9). In asserting so, Augustine was echoing the defence of Jesus Himself for the use of purportedly obscure figures-of-speech in preaching, according to Matthew 13:11-12,

> Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Such a practice of intentional obscurity was for Augustine a fruitful form of *eloquentia* since it divides the line between the Christian and the unbelieving pagan in their approaches to the Bible: the Christian will gain insight through the

leading of faith itself while the truth is necessarily veiled from pagans who lack that faith, thus preventing them from abusing it. That Augustine argues the Bible to encompass a new kind of eloquence in which the reader is urged to look beyond the beautiful surface of words to discover their true import, while he even subjects it to Classical assessments of eloquence, marks Augustine's qualifiable anxiety in face of the values imparted to him by Classical learning surrounding the usefulness of rhetoric itself.

IV. Parrhesia (Free Speech) and the Motivations of Truth: The Speaker's Exemplarity

Where Augustine's anxiety regarding the duplicity of rhetoric — a tool of pagan origins — is revealed in the earlier part of Book IV of *De Doctrina Christiana*, his active application of Classical models of 'good' speech (*eloquentia*) as a vital part of his catechetical instructions on how the preacher should preach reveals another level of concession granted by Augustine to the usefulness of pagan learning. The emphasis on the educational-moral purposes to which rhetoric can be put in the *ars praedicandi* is in reality Augustine's application of the canonical position put forth by Cicero that "To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory"(XII. 27). The art of the preacher, laid out by Augustine in line with Classical eloquence's focus on *ethos* (the speaker's character), *pathos* (the audience's emotions) and *logos* (literally the word, but also referring to the logical 'proof' or appeal of the message), is to persuade and convince its audience. Furthermore, in delineating a good preacher from a bad one, where the former is a man of faith who practises

what he preaches as opposed to one who enjoys rhetoric for rhetoric's sake (as I shall demonstrate later), Augustine's model of the ideal preacher echoes the Classical paradigm of the ideal rhetor defined by Quintillian. In Quintillian's own words, the ideal rhetor must be "a good man skilled in speaking" (*Institutio Oratoria*, XII. i.1); morals must be encompassed in an ideal rhetor other than just eloquence. This focus on the affirmation of an ethical-moral imperative in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* proves to be his adaptation of the rhetorical paradigms bequeathed by Classical learning especially in Quintillian, where the speaker must take care that he inspires his audience to the right action, and embodies it in himself as an example too. Warning is made particularly of the presence of carnal listeners, and of preachers who seem concerned only with the satisfying of such carnal audiences' appetites to hear flattering deceptions, much like the pagans and apostate Jews:

> So much care has been lavished on this suavity by men that writings are read which not only should not be put in practice but rather should be avoided and detested, since they contain only completely evil and wicked things urged by most vile and wicked men, not that they may win consent but only for the sake of pleasure. May God avert from His Church what the prophet Jeremias observed concerning the Synagogue of the Jews, saying: "Astonishing and wonderful things have been done in the land. The prophets prophesied falsehood, and the priests clapped their hands: and my people loved such things […]" (XIV. 30)

As Augustine suggests here, the license of the preacher to make his words sound pleasant and convincing as he deems fit (*parrhesia*), an imperative of Classical learning, needs to be moderated by his conscience against a mere attempt to please its audience with sweet sounds. This is because sweet words are capable of misleading their audience into serious doctrinal error and apostasy. This marks

Augustine's awareness of the divide between the 'sweet' auditory exterior of eloquence as opposed to the dangers it may harbour within in pagan falsehoods and the incitement to pagan idolatry, an encouragement to the preacher to make Christian truth based on scriptural hegemony the focus of his message.

Augustine's cautious look at this paradigm of free speech for the preacher is however also balanced with an acknowledgement that when used by the right person, it can indeed lead to a love for — and a pursuit of — the truth. This emphasis on the right speaker, traditionally termed the aspect of *ethos* in Classical rhetoric, marks Augustine's re-directing of Classical learning to a Christian end of affirming Scriptural superiority. As a start, the ideal rhetor-orator is not the pagan teacher concerned with the amusement of his audience or its persuasion alone; rather, this ideal rhetor-orator embodies in himself the desirable qualities of a Christian believer who places a life of piety and prayer above all else:

> Thus this orator of ours, when he speaks of the just and holy and good — nor should he speak of anything else — so acts when he speaks that he may be understood and that he may be willingly and obediently heard. And he should not doubt that he is able to do these things […] more through the piety of his prayers than through the skill of his oratory, so that, […] he is a petitioner before he is a speaker. (XV. 32)

The ideal orator in Augustine's economy of representation in *De Doctrina Christiana* embodies the virtue of being a *lectio divina* (reader of divine scripture) who applies the patience of reading Scriptures and hearing from God based on them, but more so, he is not affected in style of preaching. In another passage, this natural ability of the ideal speaker or preacher to offer 'proof' for the truth of his message is, as Augustine attests, best shown in the exemplarity of his moral life, another adjustment made of the *ethos* aspect in Classical learning again. The

illustration Augustine uses points to the moral hypocrite who does not practice what he preaches:

> For there are many who seek a defense of their evil lives in those of their superiors and teachers, responding in their hearts or, if it breaks forth so far, with their lips, and saying, "Why do you not do what you preach that I do?" Thus it happens that they do not obediently hear one who does not hear himself, and they condemn the word of God which is preached to them along with the preacher himself. (XXVII. 60)

In Augustine's conception of the ideal rhetor-preacher, it is not good enough to preach well. Faith and belief in what one preaches to the extent of putting it into action is what sets the Christian rhetor-preacher apart from his pagan counterpart, since the latter is not under any onus to obey a moral law set out in the Bible. Underscoring a more acute moral anxiety, Augustine even lays out the possibility that the Bible — the Word of God — can be discredited based on the lack of exemplarity in the speaker himself, thereby showing that the Classical aspect of *ethos* is very much an active concern in his theorizing of an ideal rhetor in the Christian context.

If the ideal of natural, unaffected speech as bequeathed by Classical learning proves influential to Augustine's representation of the *ars praedicandi* in *De Doctrina Christiana*, its high point is shown in Augustine's concern for stylistic registers in his sense of logocentrism (word-centeredness). Citing Cicero's theory of an oratorical style suited to the demands of the occasion, Augustine thus affirms: "He is therefore eloquent who in order to teach, can speak of small things in a subdued manner, and in order to please, can speak of moderate things in a temperate manner, and in order to persuade, can speak of great things in a grand manner" (XVII. 34). The license to speak as the preacher deems fit, according to

the occasion and his motives, is particularly maintained by Augustine in his advocating the mixing of different stylistic registers, ironically in an awareness that persistence in a particular style will bore his audience:

> But no one should think that it is contrary to theory to mix these three manners; rather, speech should be varied with all types of style in so far as this may be done appropriately. For when one style is maintained too long, it loses the listener. When transitions are made from one to another, […] it proceeds more effectively, although each style has its own varieties in the discourse of eloquent men by means of which the sense of the audience are not permitted to cool or languish. (XXII. 51)

On a superficial level, this overt concern for stylistic register would appear to be what Harrison calls "a rather decadent selling-out to pagan critics and the over-refined sensibilities of an educated, cultured rhetor" in a manner which is inimical to a Christian love of the truth (218). However, on a closer look in the light of the other passages of *De Doctrina*, it reveals Augustine's re-directing of the Classical concern for style to Christian homilectic ends. This is reinforced in Augustine's narration of the episode where he persistently preached in the grand style to dissuade the citizens of Caesarea in Mauretania from killing one another with stones. The effect of his preaching in the grand style, as he narrates, is a surprising victory not only over their emotions, but also over their minds where they did cast forth from their hearts "such a ferocious and inveterate evil": "They indicated by applause that they were being taught or pleased, but tears indicated that they were persuaded" (XXIV. 53). While the *ars praedicandi* used by the Christian preacher still reveals an innate preoccupation with style, it is not a style-for-style's sake, but is geared towards a higher end of affirming the Christian end of affirming a love for one's neighbour and for God Himself (*caritas*) by inspiring its audience

to a love of Christian truth as embodied in the Scriptures.

V. Conclusion

We have seen in *De Doctrina Christiana* how Augustine takes the best out of Classical-pagan models of rhetoric to propose a new Christianized form of rhetoric, the *ars praedicandi* (art of preaching). For Augustine, the catechizing of baptismal candidates in the Christian faith requires an initiation into the Christian hermeneutical worldview, which makes sense of verbal-rhetorical acts through the recognition of their sacramental quality amongst pagan and Christian communities alike. In doing so, Augustine thus ended up foregrounding the same questions of rhetoric's ambivalence, and its potentiality to be abused, which pagan rhetors and philosophers — his *auctores* — had already foregrounded prior to him, and to re-work them for his own ends of reinforcing Christian truth in the Holy Scriptures. This subtle and indirect tribute to the Classical *auctores* therefore bridges the gap between a supposedly pagan *ars rhetorica* and the new Christian *ars praedicandi*, marking his self-conscious attempt to redeem the Classics and their models of ideal speech (as well as the ideal speaker and interpreter-reader). In my next chapter, this question of adequate "use" of the pagan Classics, demonstrated notably in the pagan books of *historia* (translatable as either "history" or "story") which Augustine cites in *De Civitate Dei*, informs my study of Augustine's indirect accommodation of pagan literature, another example of the bridge he provides between Classical Greco-Roman culture and Christianity's hegemonic claims.

Teo, Chapter 3. *In Submissio Gloriae Majore*: The Consolations of Pagan *Historia* and the Invention of Christendom in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*

"For I reckon that the present sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us[*ad futuram gloriam quae revelabitur in nobis*]." (Romans 8:18)

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [*gloriam Domini speculantes in eandem imaginem*], are changed into the same image from glory to glory [*a claritate in claritatem*], even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

In the former chapters on Augustine's *Confessiones* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, I dealt with the rhetoric of conversion and the rhetoric of preaching (*ars praedicandi*), and their indebtedness to pagan philosophy. Augustine's readerly critique of the pagan Classics locates him as a Christian unwilling to cede doctrinal importance to them. Yet it also indicates that he adapted their functions for the purported greater good of reinforcing Christian exemplarity and truth. The models of his autobiography of conversion and rhetorical-catechical instruction for baptismal candidates and preachers affirm this purpose. This implicit inquiry into the possible applications of pagan Greco-Roman thought and literature to a Christian economy of representation is further highlighted in *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*) in its bridging between profane and sacred narratives of history, to proclaim the superiority of a Christian hermeneutical interpretation of historical events prior to and contemporary with Augustine's Rome.[9] In using the terms, "profane" and "sacred" history, I must also for the sake of clarity state their differences. "Profane" history refers to the various pagan fables recorded in their mythological literature, and also, the secular history chronicled by Roman

[9] The word "*historia*" has the sense of "story", as well as the sense of "temporal event," both of which I am utilizing in my study of Augustine.

historians and scribes. By contrast, "sacred" history means the Christian account of God's sovereignty represented by the Bible and its eschatological-apocalyptic vision of man's Fall into sin, Redemption through Christ, and lastly, Final Judgement (Bïttner, 347). Pagans of the Roman Empire claimed that the civic tragedy of Rome's Sack by the Alaric Goths in AD 410 resulted from Christianity's removal of the worship of the old gods who helped maintain Rome's peace and prosperity, thereby eroding Rome's political stability through Christian-imperial rule. Formulated in response to these pagan accusations against Christianity, *De Civitate Dei* is however not just an occasional apologetic work against the pagans' reading of history. Also, it is Augustine's careful incorporation of the pagans' various versions of history to debunk the myths of political-secular idealism adhered to by his opponents: pagan *historia* thus ironically becomes Augustine's *malleus contra paganos* (hammer against the pagans). Augustine's polemical enterprise in *De Civitate Dei* paves the way for his evangelization to the pagans through his Christianized brand of *historia*, explaining Christianity's possible strengths as a faith in this world, as well as what pagans who convert can look forward to in the Christian otherworld.

II. In Quaestio Hierosalymis et Babyloniae: An Introduction to the Typology of the Two Cities, their Genesis and Eschatological Significance

Before studying how Augustine subordinates pagan *historia* to an overarching framework of Christian eschatological-providential history in *De Civitate Dei*, we must first study his understanding of political-civic communities in and outside

fourth century Rome, and the functional roles they play in Christian eschatology. Augustine was not just concerned with the distinction (and even opposition) between a pagan and a Christian on the individual level, but also, with the distinction between the imagined communities associated with these two identities (Anderson, 6). As Augustine postulates, "For the blessedness of a community and of an individual flow from the same source for a community [*comitatus*] is nothing else than a harmonious collection of individuals" (Book I, 15). Johannes van Oort has argued that Augustine's aim in rebutting his opponents was to show that Christianity was not as anti-social and detached from the world as they claimed it to be. He suggests,

> While his opponents argued that Christianity is not a community-building force, the name *civitas Dei* is the self-assured proclamation of the Christian idea of community: the *civitas* surpassing all *civitates* is of divine origin. While all *civitates* (*poleis*!) are linked to their particular cult of gods, the *civitas Dei* is united with the true God. Only the worship of this God can create the true *civitas*-community, the community of saints. Only here does true justice (*iustitia*) prevail and blessed life (*vita beata*) become manifest. (107)

This opposition of the two cities, of the *civitas terrena* (earthly city) and the *civitas Dei* (city of God), to which the true citizenships — and subsequently eschatological destinies in the Last Judgement — of pagans and Christians are tied, marks a central opposition in *De Civitate Dei*.

This division between the two cities is foregrounded in the opening preface, which explains Augustine's intention for writing such a *magnum opus*,

> The glorious city of God is my theme in this work […] I have undertaken its defence against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city — a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a

> stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until "righteousness shall return unto judgment," and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace. […] we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though itself be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule. [*libido dominandi*] (*DCD*, Book I, Preface)

In line with the eschatological *topoi* of the Biblical book of Revelation, Augustine draws a contrast between two cities, namely the heavenly Jerusalem and Babylon which rules the nations with an iron will, calling into allusion three vital passages of the Bible in his delineation of political-spiritual communities,

> The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here: or, lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

> And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither: I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. […] and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Revelation 17: 1-2, 5)

> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

Instead of characterizing the *civitas Dei*, heaven itself, as solely a place (*topos*), Augustine defines it in the Christian communities that abide by the core principles of active living faith in God amidst this *saeculum* (world). These communities do not occupy a place within the earthly city, but rather remain as pilgrims (*peregrinatio*) on a journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem, constantly detached from this *civitas terrena* in the awareness of its transitory nature. In direct contrast

to the heavenly Jerusalem, embodied both in a new ideal good place to arrive for Christians as part of an *apocalypsis* (unraveling of final causes) and mystically in Christian communities of faith, Babylon is evoked as a great power to contend with in this world. Babylon is however beset with its own moral-ethical shortcomings which bring about its inevitable decline as a mystical representation of the earthly city.

Augustine's characterization of the Church is however unlike the dualistic eschatological *topoi* of John's *Revelation* which alluded to the notion of a Church under the captivity of spiritual Babylon and hence characterized the Church as a mirror of the heavenly city. Fundamentally Augustine was aware that this *civitas Dei* encompasses more appropriately the "communion of saints" including Old Testament patriarchs (an *invisible* community known only to God), while "there are in the visible Church many who are not of the number" (Baynes, 14). This realistic acknowledgement that in the *civitas terrena*, all Christians and pagans alike must abide till their final separation in the Day of Judgement, is revealed in the closing argument of Book I,

> But let this city bear in mind, that among her enemies lie hid those who are destined to be fellow-citizens, that she may not think it a fruitless labour to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith. So, too, as long as she is a stranger in the world, the city of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the lot of the saints. Of these, some are not now recognized; others declare themselves, and do not hesitate to make common cause with our enemies in declaring against God, whose sacramental badge they wear. These people you may to-day see thronging the churches with us, to-morrow crowding the theatres with the godless. […] In truth, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and until the last judgment effect their separation. (I. 35)

G.W. Trompf observes that Augustine "was writing in a Theodosian rather than a Diocletianic world" (256), where Christianity was the official state religion promising socio-economic benefits for its adherents, instead of experiencing persecution as a minority cult. This observation is useful in considering the passage above. The ready slippage between these dualistic categories of a pagan and a Christian is established through Augustine's understanding that the pagan persecutors of the faith may one day be touched by the examples of the saints' and martyrs' perseverance to conversion. Conversely, those who nominally profess Christian faith may be true pagans at heart, bent on reaping the economic-social-political benefits attached to the state religion of the post-Theodosian world while indirectly ravaging the Christian Church from within by introducing their own pagan ways. Robert A. Markus captures this sense of an unclear dividing line between the pagan and the Christian that informs Augustine's skepticism about the ability of early Church fathers to perceive accurately the motives behind pagan conversion to Christianity:

> Martyrdom or baptism were, indeed, the decisive marks of a Christian; but now that the age of the persecutions [sic] a distant memory, and martyrdom, or willingness to undergo it, no longer a test of Christian commitment, baptism seemed, to many, a net of too coarse a mesh to catch the 'authentic Christians' among those who were Christian in name, but not in reality. (201)

While concerned with showing that the Christian Church had much to offer to the world with its sacraments — baptism and communion — and its Gospel message of salvation, Augustine was thus also aware that the true Christians cannot be sorted out from those feigning Christian belief for their own selfish ends of self-

preservation (pagans and apostates). This division of pagan and Christian into their two correlative communities of the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei* was thus an imaginative division, and not easily distinguishable within this *saeculum*. In Augustine's own words, this world contemporary with Augustine's fourth century Rome is but part of a "mystic Babylon" which "means confusion" (*DCD*, Book XVIII, 41).

The use-enjoy dichotomy, of *uti* as opposed to *frui*, is an important feature by which Augustine distinguishes further between the *civitas terrena* (earthly city) and the *civitas aeterna* (eternal city) belonging to God. In allusion to *De Doctrina Christiana* here, this question of the use-enjoy distinction and how it distinguishes the spiritual man — the faithful Christian — from a carnal-minded pagan is already foregrounded by Augustine,

> there is a profound question as to whether men should enjoy themselves, use themselves, or do both. For it is commanded to us that we should love one another, but it is to be asked whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake or for the sake of something else. If for his own sake, we enjoy him; if for the sake of something else, we use him. But I think that man is to be loved for the sake of something else. In that which is to be loved for its own sake the blessed life resides […] But no one ought to enjoy himself either, […] because he should not love himself on account of himself but on account of Him who is to be enjoyed. For he is the best man who turns his whole life toward the immutable life and adheres to it with all his affection. (*DDC*, Book I, XXII. 20-21)

Here, adapting Plato's idea that the man who loves the immutable supernal forms beyond the intelligible world of the senses is the best man, Augustine arrives at the conclusion that man is only to use man for the sake of enjoying God, while as the First and Last Cause who precedes all things, God becomes the only being

who can be enjoyed. Augustine thus asserts that the love of man must be subordinated to the love of God by using the *uti-frui* dichotomy to expound upon these two types of love in this world.

In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine expands on this notion to create the distinction between the two mystical communities of those citizens of the *civitas Dei* (the faithful Christians) and those of the *civitas terrena* (the pagans-apostates), in stating the definition of a "people" (*populus*) based on their main object of loves in this world,

> But if we […] say that a people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love, then, in order to discover the character of any people, we have only to observe what they love. […] and it will be a superior people in proportion as it is bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it is bound together by lower. (*DCD*, Book XIX, 24)

As a macrocosmic application of the Platonic analogy which he used in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine creates a differentiation between the two communities of the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena* based on their common interests, namely the will to love (*voluntas amare*). In the word of Peter Brown, this differentiation "hits upon a fundamental motive: *dilectio*, which, for Augustine, stands for the orientation of the whole personality, its deepest wishes and its basic capacity to love, and so it is far from being limited to purely rational pursuit of ends" (28; also, Baynes, 16). In line with the divide that I have drawn between pagan habits of reading through the flesh (the carnal) and Christian habits of reading through the spirit in my earlier study of *Confessiones* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine replays a similar divide by positing that true

Christians do not get unnecessarily caught up by the secular-pagan ideals of this world, the *civitas terrena*, while reprobate pagans live solely for approval via these ideals. This is defined in his contrast between those who use the earthly city as Christians as a refuge from evil, and also to further God's will in the advancement of His kingdom-to-come, and those who enjoy the earthly city for its own sake. As he states, "The good use the world that they may enjoy God: the wicked, on the contrary, that they may enjoy the world may fain use God" (Book XV, 7). These diametric opposites Augustine creates shows the sincere and faithful Christians abiding in this earthly city in a self-abnegating way, seeking the ultimate *gloria* of God alone, while the reprobate pagans are characterized as self-regarding, seeing all other things as a reflection of one's own interests.[10]

III. When History is Not Enough: Augustine's Re-reading of Eusebian Triumphalism and Christian Sociolatry

While Augustine was keen on delineating the opposition between these two cities, namely the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei*, we have also seen that this division operates chiefly on the mystical level (*mystice* in Augustine's words). This realization that the two cities cannot be clearly distinguished one from the other even within the entity of the visible Church was Augustine's own alternative to the triumphalism of "*tempora constantinia*" which Eusebius of Caesarea and his

[10] An example of this self-abnegating thrust that Catholics or Christians live by is reflected in the monastic creed of the Franciscan Order of piety, which declares "*Ad majorem gloriam nominis Dei*" (to the greater glory of God's name). Worldly renunciation, specifically the rejection of carnal pleasures, for such orders entails the recognition that a glorifying of God's *ordo* requires self-humbling.

pro-imperialist sympathizers represent. Constantine's conversion has been much studied as an event which affected the ecclesiastical politics and theological-philosophical debates of that period, and would require another thesis for further study. Suffice to say, it marked a transition for Christianity from a "persecuted minority cult to a growing religion that enjoyed favored status" (Chang, 41). But more than just a change in Christianity's social status, it marked the marriage of the Church with Rome, the *civitas aeterna* (eternal city) in the civic imagination of pagan and Christian Roman citizens alike. This marriage of ideas was reinforced in a grand metanarrative, implying that the time of Constantine's conversion and his pro-ecclesiastical policies was not "merely a historical event but actually the consummation of history itself," with Constantine claiming for himself the illustrious title of the Thirteenth Apostle (Chang, 43). Eusebius' final imperial panegyric in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* conveys this sense in which the cult of ancient Roman emperor-worship is adapted here to the topos of Constantine's Christian apostolicity as anointed through God's providence — a re-working of the Classical pagan ideal of sociolatry centered on an emperor descended of the gods into a new Christian model of sociolatry, where the emperor is now Christ's vicegerent:

> And when he had made the ground of all your minds clean and clear, he finally committed to this all-wise and God-beloved Ruler, who, being endowed with judgment and prudence, as well as with other gifts, and being able to examine and discriminate accurately the minds of those committed to his charge, from the first day, so to speak, has not ceased to build. […] But in the leader of all it is reasonable to suppose that Christ himself dwells in his fullness, and in those that occupy the second rank after him, in proportion as each is able to contain the power of

> Christ and of the Holy Spirit. (Eusebius, *HE*, Book X, Chapter IV, 61, 67, trans. Phillip Schaff)

As a remarkable precedent and contrast to Augustine's two cities, Eusebius of Caesarea's imperialist panegyric combined the two orders, the earthly order of the Roman emperor, with the heavenly order of God the Father, Christ and of the Holy Spirit, in a grand sweeping meta-narrative on the ability of the Constantinian republic to mirror the messianic peace promised by Christ in the heavens. The marriage of the *pax Romana* with the *pax Christi* as embodied in a post-Constantinian constitution is thus indicative of a common liability of Christians to associate "*tempora constantinia*"(Constantinian times) synonymously with "*tempora Christiana*" (Christian times) — a conception of a messianic age when the heavenly order was literally seen to be attained on earth.

The optimism (or triumphalism) trumpeted by Eusebius must however also be read in the light of the "counterhistory" promulgated by the pagan opponents of the Christian faith. The triumphalist-Christian view of "*tempora constantinia*," and also "*tempora Christiana*," was challenged by the alternative pagan view which saw these times as a sign of decline for Rome and its government, since the protector-pagan gods Rome used to pay patronage in the hope of earning divine favors have been ignored and removed. This motif of the *dei absconditi* (the gods abandoned) was an alternative narrative invested in the ideal of "a distant, golden past, untroubled by the rise of Christianity" (Brown, 301) which Augustine saw a pressing need to address as much as the self-complacent triumphalism of Eusebius' sociolatry.

As a vital part of his homilectic argument to re-define *tempora Christiana* as a time of God's grace and divine favour upon Christians, Augustine cites the pagan Classical poets as his line of defence against his pagan opponents. In citing Virgil's *Aeneid* as an authority, he claims against the pagans that their gods are not able to sustain and protect them. Rather, their images are dependent upon man's fear and propitiation to exist (Book I, 3). He compares the asylum offered by the temple of Juno for the Trojans with that offered by the Christian churches dedicated to the apostles, the former of which could not protect its own citizens unlike the latter. As he cites Virgil in the capacity of a scribe-exegete,

> "Phoenix and Ulysses fell
> In the void courts by Juno's cell
> Were set the spoil to keep;
> Snatched from the burning shrines away,
> There Ilium's mighty treasure lay,
> Rich altars, bowls of massy gold,
> And captive raiment, rudely rolled
> In one promiscuous heap;
> While boys and matrons, wild with fear,
> In long array were standing near."
>
> […] There liberty was lost; here preserved. There bondage was strict; here strictly excluded. Into that temple men were driven to become the chattels of their enemies, now lording it over them; into these churches men were led by their relenting foes, that they might be at liberty. In fine, the gentle Greeks appropriated that temple of Juno to the purpose of their own avarice and pride; while these churches of Christ were chosen even by the savage barbarians as the fit scenes for humility and mercy. […] there is no question that he depicted the usual custom of an enemy when sacking a city. (Book I, 4)

The sharp contrasts between the violence displayed within a pagan temple of Juno and the mercy bestowed upon Christians highlight a vital difference between the old pagan times Romans portrayed *mimetically* in mythological literature, and the

current *tempora Christiana* which the pagans were criticizing as an evil in the body politic. By tapping into a lingering respect for Virgil as an *auctore*, also his mythological-historical source, Augustine creates a twist to his verbatim citation of Virgil. Virgil — a much-respected pagan author — had ironically confirmed Augustine's claim against the pagans that God had manifested His grace against the norms of a city's sacking, which stipulate merciless pillaging and violence on the enemies. Contrary to pagan accusations that these *tempora Christiana* had marked the beginning of evil times in the empire's decline, Augustine defends the ability of these times to stand as testimonies to divine Providence and especially God's mercy.

In addition, in order to identify the internal inconsistencies of the pagans' counter-history, Augustine must re-define the populace's (whether pagan or Christian) understanding of *tempora Christiana* in a new light. These times after civic paganism's gradual demise in Rome — *tempora postconstantinia* — were indeed *tempora Christiana*, but they did not promise for pagans and Christians alike the fulfillment of the ideals of this world. Augustine, in this realistic interpretation of *tempora Christiana*, thus militated against Eusebius' triumphalism which emphasized the status of Rome as the eternal city, exposing it as a flawed idea amongst both pagans and Christians alike that God's blessings had to be manifested necessarily in peace and prosperous times. Instead, as he suggests in his account of the Sack of Rome, pagans should be converted by the examples of the Christians' patient suffering and also upon perceiving the grace shown on account of Christ to Christian and pagan alike:

> And they ought to attribute it to the spirit of these *Christian times*, that *contrary to the custom of war*, these blood-thirsty barbarians spared them, and spared them for Christ's sake, whether this mercy was shown in promiscuous places, or in those places specially dedicated to Christ's name, and of which the very largest were selected as sanctuaries, that full scope might thus be given to the expansive compassion which desired that a large multitude might find shelter there. Therefore ought they to give God thanks, and with sincere confession flee for refuge to His name, that so they may escape the punishment of eternal fire — they who with lying lips took upon them this name, that they might escape the punishment of present destruction. (Book I.1) [own italics]

Here, Augustine was indirectly alluding to the Arian Christian beliefs of Alaric and his fellow barbarians. Compelled by their Christian beliefs (despite being labeled as heterodox for being non-Trinitarian), Alaric and his barbarian soldiers actually showed mercy to those who sought asylum in the churches, "open sanctuary for all [..], whether Christian or Pagan" (*DCD*, Book I, 1) for fear of committing sacrilege against Christ. As such, Augustine's interpretation of Christian times veered significantly from Eusebius' optimism and the misplaced nostalgia of his pagan opponents for a Golden Age pre-Christian Rome. For Augustine stressed in opposition that God's blessings were actually shown rather in the mercy He allows amidst difficult times.

IV. Whence This Suffering in This Saeculum?: Augustinian Theodicies and the Problem of Evil

In attempting to deflate both the pagan-rooted sociolatry of Eusebian triumphalism and the pagan nostalgia for the Old Rome, Augustine's purpose in *De Civitate Dei* thus became oriented towards directing the minds of pagans and Christians away from a focus on the temporal goods of this world, the former for

the sake of their conversion and the latter for the sake of their catechesis in Biblical truth.[11] As a vital part of his theodicy, Augustine cautions against this attempt to perceive the Christian constitution under Constantine (and after in Christian emperors) to continue in line with the *pax Romana*, since

> The Christian God was the watchful caretaker of Christians' souls, but the Christian God had never promised to guard cities besieged by enemies. Pagan nostalgia was based on a calculated misreading of history and on the naïve belief of some poets in an empire without end (*imperium sine fine*). (Kaufman, 78)

In echoing the Old Testament wisdom of *Ecclesiastes*, where worldly goods are scorned as "vanity" in Solomon's words (*Eccl.*1: 14), Augustine thus suggests that the secular world-event of Rome's Sack fits into the divine schema of God's Providence with purposefulness. Good and evil men both suffer because of a common need to test them and mould them, the good (the faithful Christians) so that it would curb their pride in their status as the elect, and the pagans that they might repent of their wickedness and convert to God's ways. As he highlights of the suffering,

> For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly, and chaff to smoke; and under the same flail the straw is beaten small, while the grain is cleansed; […] so the same violence of affliction proves, purges, clarifies the good, but damns, ruins, exterminates the wicked. (Book I, 8)

> Accordingly, this seems to me to be one principal reason why the good are chastised along with the wicked, when God is pleased to visit with temporal punishments the profligate punishments the profligate manners of a community. They are punished together, not because they have spent an equally corrupt life, but because the good as well as the wicked, though not equally with them, love this present life; while they ought to hold it cheap, that the wicked, being admonished and reformed by their

[11] I use "goods" to refer to either material possessions, or ideals clung onto in this world.

> example, might lay hold of life eternal. […] it remains uncertain whether they may not come to a better mind. (Book I, 9)

On the one hand, these difficult times of war and unrest after Rome's Sack proved the testing that God desires Christians to go through together with the 'pagans'. The apocalyptic image of the furnace's fires purifying gold from dross matter is an image that Augustine uses to continue affirming the opposition he sets between the citizens of the two cities, of those who remain in the earthly city and are bent solely on the love of its goods, and those who use the earthly city but eventually leave it behind to find true citizenship in the *civitas Dei* amongst a community of God-fearing Christians. On the other hand, he suggests Christians and pagans share the same love of this life, a life which is however nothing compared to that life in a future *apocalypsis* when the final separation between the citizens of the *civitas terrena* and the citizens of the *civitas Dei* will be fulfilled. In allowing this tribulation, God — as Augustine suggests — was not only attempting to re-direct the eyes of Christians away from an undue obsession with the pleasures of this life, but He was also attempting to win over the souls and hearts of those pagans who had yet to accept the gospel message of salvation through living examples of Christian love (*caritas*) and patience towards them. According to Augustine's apologetic argument, what the pagans had termed as undesirable from a carnal perspective, in their obsession with worldly goods, was paradoxically intended by God for their good without their realizing it.

Augustine's citation of narrative examples in pagan *historia* reinforces his apologetic strategy against the pagans, where he undercuts their love for *honor* —

a love that often drives them to choose suicide as an option in the face of difficult times. In doing so, he was thus encouraging his pagan audience to see suffering and physical humiliation in this world — what they would deem as detrimental to their pursuit of a good life — as paradoxically things of greater value intended by God. Using the example of Lucretia from Roman history, he builds up this case against the pagan conception of honor in the act of honourable suicide, which he deflates as contradictory in use. Violated by King Tarquin's son, she "made known the wickedness of this young profligate to her husband Collatinus, and to Brutus her kinsman, men of high rank and full of courage, and bound them by an oath to avenge it" before killing herself in shame (Book I, 19). Although lauded by pagan Romans as an act of honor in the face of death, Lucretia's act conveys for Augustine a dangerous example which pagans and Christians alike must rethink and subsequently shun, since that very love of honor itself points to the sin of *cupiditas* (pride) which marks the inhabitants of the earthly city:

> And accordingly, since she killed herself for being subjected to an outrage in which she had no guilty part, it is obvious that this act of hers was prompted not by the love of purity, but by the overwhelming burden of shame. She was ashamed that so foul a crime had been perpetuated upon her, though without her abetting; and this matron, with the Roman love of glory in her veins, was seized with a proud dread that, if she continued to live, it would be supposed she willingly did not resent the wrong that had been done her. (Book I, 19)

Here, Lucretia's "Roman love of glory" thus becomes substitutable with *cupiditas* (the solipsistic love of oneself) in Augustine's narration of her fate in Roman history, earning Augustine's disapprobation as a sin that afflicts the pagans, citizens of the *civitas terrena*. This act of suicide so as to avoid suffering shame in

reputation, while construing an appearance of honor in Roman eyes, is ironically nothing short of cowardice as indicated by Augustine's emphasis on the overt "shame" and "proud dread" that Lucretia felt solely for herself.

That which the pagan Romans interpreted as *honor* in committing suicide in lieu of suffering physical humiliation and pain was re-interpreted by Augustine as lacking in magnanimity and "greatness of soul" (Book I, 22). This is illustrated particularly in the uncanny respect he accords to Regulus as a virtuous pagan, despite Regulus' obvious love for the earthly city and its goods (both figurative and physical). The patience with which Regulus endured his captivity under the Carthaginians amidst humiliation and abuse was an example which offered much for emulation by Christians, even if Regulus was very much a pagan who worshipped false gods (including this world's ideals). As Augustine himself states,

> Patient under the domination of the Carthaginians, and constant in his love of the Romans, he neither deprived the one of his conquered body nor the other of his unconquered spirit. Neither was it love of life that prevented him from killing himself. This was plainly enough indicated by his unhesitatingly returning, on account of his promise and oath, to the same enemies whom he had more grievously provoked by his words in the senate than even by his arms in battle. Having such a contempt of life, and preferring to end it by whatever torments excited enemies might contrive, rather than terminate it by his own hand, he could not more distinctly have declared how great a crime he judged suicide to be. (Book I, 24)

Augustine's laudatory characterization of Regulus as a virtuous pagan who had contempt for this world's goods is thus juxtaposed with the example of Lucretia's choice of committing violence on herself. In doing so, he thus reinforces his stance that the evils of human suffering exist on all fronts even in pre-Christian

times. Re-reading pagan history realistically as itself constituted by sufferings similar to those of his time, Augustine thus explodes the idealistic myth of a pre-Christian Golden Age in Rome as practised by its cultural heroes.

V. Justitia (Justice) and The Loves of this World: Historicizing the Human Passions

As a vital part of Augustine's political realism, which he directs against Christianity's pagan opponents, the question of whether justice (*justitia*) ever existed in Rome itself loomed large as a subsequent meditation on whether the pre-Christian Gold Age Rome posited by pagans as a counter-narrative ever existed. His critical dialogue with Cicero and other Roman philosophers-historians in the course of his apologetics is a case in point. Similar to Cicero, Augustine defines the *populus* who make up the republic as "an assemblage associated by a common acknowledgement of law, and by a community of interests" (Book II, 21). He also adds that a *respublica* (republic), the "weal of the people" (21), is dependent on the use of just rule by its government; conversely, if there is no just rule, the republic does not exist at all. This is shown where he explains the significance of the body politic metaphor and its shortcomings in relation to the Roman polity, which pagans have failed to recognize in upholding the cultural-political-religious myth of a Golden Age in pre-Christian Rome:

> Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of

> cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity.(Book IV, 4)

The body politic metaphor here utilizes the image of robbers at the higher end of the hierarchy robbing from the lower minions by force, whereas the unity of the state is suggested ironically as an alliance between men bounded upon lower interests — namely, the love of material goods rather than the people's common welfare. This earthly order which imposes its presence on the rest of the earth is characterized by Augustine as a growing living organism perpetuating tyranny via the *populus*' subjugation under fear — thus effectively a counterpoint to the pagans' narrative of a Golden Age in Rome.

This metaphor of robbers ruling the den to characterize the state of pre-Christian Rome — a representation of the earthly city — proleptically points to a famous analogy which Augustine borrows from Cicero himself, namely the confrontation between Alexander the Great and a pirate. Questioned by Alexander for "hostile possession of the sea," the pirate — himself a variation on the image of a robber ruling a hierarchical body — boldly protested,

> "What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor" (Book IV, 4).

This anecdote, derived from Cicero's *De Republica* III, develops the image of the state as a den of robbers to a surprising conclusion. As suggested, Alexander cannot legally demand the exaction of justice from a pirate (a robber in open seas) because the ruler and the pirate only differ in terms of degree, and not by kind, in

their extortion of dominion over others. By appropriating the political skepticism of this Ciceronian anecdote, Augustine highlights the irony that "Rome was never a republic, because true justice had never a place in it" (Book II, 21). The pagans cannot thus claim *Romanitas* as a system of justice prior to Christianity's advent, since it is denied in the voice of their own *auctore*, Cicero.

In this critical dialogue with historical *auctores*, Augustine's critique of *Romanitas* as espoused by his pagan opponents did not however necessarily register *Romanitas* as totally ineffective. Augustine was aware of the separation between the order of the earthly city and God's order of the heavenly Jerusalem. In Herbert Deane's words, the order of this world which the pagans advocated was an "external, coercive, repressive, remedial order," while the order found in the City of God was "a spontaneous order of love and not an order of coercion or domination" (52). Augustine's understanding of the superiority of the *ordo amoris* found in heaven as opposed to this coercive earthly order is situated in the awareness that in the *civitas terrena* Rome embodies, there is an innate need for the existence of fear — of an external political enemy — to curb human tendencies to abandon oneself to lusts. Although acting more as a deterrent against evil than an inculcation of goodness in the *civitas terrena*, this imposition of order by fear and a sheer will-to-power was necessary in this earthly city.

Augustine uses the functional role of Carthage, a former enemy of Rome now annexed to it, to establish his case for the need of fear to curb lustful human passions in Rome — an indication of the flawed nature of the *civitas terrena*. As he suggests, pagan Romans already formed a *comitatus* prone to indulgence in

worldly luxuries and the fulfillment of lustful passions. By repeatedly attacking Christianity, a true faith bent on the people's moral good, the pagans could hardly be sincere in their claims of a desire for justice:

> For why in your calamities do you complain of Christianity, unless because you desire to enjoy your luxurious licence unrestrained, and to lead an abandoned and profligate life without the interruption of any uneasiness or disaster? For certainly your desire for peace, and prosperity, and plenty is not prompted by any purpose of using these blessings honestly […] with moderation, sobriety, temperance, and piety; for your purpose rather is to run riot in an endless variety of sottish pleasures, and thus to generate from your prosperity a moral pestilence which will prove a thousandfold more disastrous than the fiercest enemies. (Book I.30)

By speaking *for* the pagans' lusts, Augustine disarmingly turns their argument for the restoration of pre-Christian Rome against them. As reinforced further in the example of Carthage's removal, the enemy within — one's own lusts — proved more dangerous than the enemy without. The removal of Rome's fear of Carthage had merely paved the way for a greater evil, a laxity and false sense of security which encouraged abandonment to lusts such as idle engagements in the theater and gladiatorial fights. Augustine here aligns himself alongside the historical figure of Nascia, who advocated the "censorship of dramatics" by prohibiting Romans from either building a new circle of seats around the theater or bringing their benches to the theatre (Cochrane, 499). Nascia's prohibition suggests an attempt to discourage Romans from frequenting the theater via this element of physical discomfort, so that they would not "yield to the enervating and emasculating influence of foreign [Greek] licentiousness" (Book I, 31). While revealing immense admiration for Nascia by addressing him commendably as

"Rome's best man without one dissentient voice" (31), Augustine was however also reservedly stressing how such censorship of dramatics was limited in its ability to remove the innate human lusts for base theatrical entertainment. This is because the hearts of the pagan Romans had not been purified by "faith," nor did they learn to "transform their natural disposition by humble godliness" (31). As Charles Norris Chochrane affirms of this limitation in pre-Christian Rome's punitive laws,

> The attitude thus assumed by the practical Romans found theoretical justification in Plato, who proposed a rigid state control over freedom of speech. This control Augustine endorses as at least a mitigation of the evils for which secular art is responsible; at the same time, he regards it as indicative of moral and social vices for which mere prohibition is in no sense a real cure. (Cochrane, 499)

Recognizing that coercion had its place in the earthly city as a deterrent against unruly passions, Augustine therefore points towards the incomplete nature of *Romanitas* where the Roman sense of justice is founded upon punitive institutions and laws which address the external signs of disorder within a state but cannot heal the real turmoil within the human soul. As part of his hammer against the pagans' apology for a return to pre-Christian Rome, the external order of *Romanitas* was not enough — albeit its commendable use of authority — because it lacked a true internal love for spiritual order (freedom from base lusts). If true justice was to be found, it can only be found — as Augustine implies — in the *civitas Dei* in its binding principles of love for God and for one's neighbour.

VI. Consolatione Theologiae: Concerning This World's Heroes

As another facet of his hammer against the pagans, Augustine also demonstrated an ambivalence towards the heroism — the ideal of his opponents — upon which pagan Rome was extolled. Seen under the scrutiny of Augustine's beliefs in the moral-ethical imperatives of *caritas*, love for God and for one's neighbour, the heroism which pagan Romans displayed in the pursuit of earthly glory was commendable insofar as it earned earthly rewards, but had nothing to offer in spurring one to love God and one's neighbour, since it was rooted in the love of the self. While glory was the "desire of which the Romans burned," spurring them onto great heroic acts, it was also "the judgement of men thinking well of men," a temporal ideal at best (Book V, 12).

Augustine's ambivalent portrayal of this Roman ideal of *gloria*, their desire to be immortalized in the memory of posterity, is revealed in his critique of the tenacity of Romans' individual and communal achievements. On the communal level, Augustine had to acknowledge that this desire for *gloria* was responsible for many of Rome's grand achievements, indirectly affirming the ideal of the *pax Romana*, a place where Romans might purportedly find their political liberty. At the same time, this desire for *gloria* was undeniably for Augustine also a means of inciting the lust for domination, an abominable vice from his Christian position. Sallust's historical commentary on Rome's expansionism becomes Augustine's support for this inherent inconsistency within *Romanitas*: "the state grew with amazing rapidity after it had obtained liberty, so great a desire of glory had taken

possession of it" (Book V, 12). But this expansion of pagan Rome is, as he comments, commensurate with the rise of cultural heroes, great men of their own times — a phenomenon which ironically lends itself to the beginning of civil unrest.

This double bind of pagan heroism is shown where cultural heroes like Marcus Cato and Caius Caesar were answers to "the prayer of men of heroic character that Bellona would excite miserable nations to war, and lash them into agitation with her bloody scourge, so that there might be occasion for the display of their valour" (Book V, 12). Using Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI, 849), Augustine produces at the same time a searching expose of these heroes' espousal of *gloria*, where it becomes a reflection also of pride and the lust for domination,

> "Others, belike, with happier grace,
> From bronze or stone shall call the face,
> Plead doubtful causes, map the skies,
> And tell when planets set or rise;
> But Roman thou, do thou control
> The nations far and wide;
> Be this thy genius, to impose
> The rule of peace on vanquished foes,
> Show pity to the humbled soul,
> And crush the sons of pride."

Virgil, Augustine's *auctore*, had himself suggested that Rome's glory was achieved by subjugating nations to its iron will. Virgil's text had thus qualified Augustine's suspicion that such mastery also connoted tyrannical rule, and even worse, a certain "vice of restless ambition" (Book III, 14). These heroes' exploits, while justified by the Roman ideal of *gloria*, were as he criticizes, ironically excuses for whitewashing the violence and carnage with which they always

attained this *gloria*, great as they appeared in pagan Roman eyes. Louis Swift also affirms, "Such renown, the bishop suggests caustically, is typical of the gladiatorial contests and serves only to hide the endless slaughter of kinsmen and allies" (278). Furthermore, Rome's triumph over Alba Longa confirmed this irony even more, where inspired by the "lust of sovereignty" over her own brothers, Rome was "praising her own crime," calling it "glory" (Book III, 14). As Augustine highlights according to Rome's own *auctores*, the fratricide and civil violence into which the Romans' pursuit of *gloria* had unfolded was injustice. The ideal of *gloria* thus promised grand achievements for this world, but with a high price to pay, proving itself anathema to the pagans' narrative of a pre-Christian Golden Age in Rome.

In using these historical examples of pagan Romans who failed the 'litmus' test of Christian moral ethics, Augustine was however not only questioning the excessive premium his opponents placed upon earthly *gloria* as a virtue of pre-Christian Rome. Also, he uses this pagan obeisance to earthly *gloria* as an admonitory lesson to his Christian audience: the virtuous pagans should inspire Christians towards greater righteousness of action. As Trompf comments in agreement,

> for Augustine *Roma aeterna* is no longer a divinity or possessing its old imperial *genius*. But there is nonetheless an ethical, hortatory truth which he interprets from the divine favours towards the city, and which intimates his residual veneration of it (cf. also Enarrat. in Pss, 124:7; Serm., 105 [9]). Examples of Roman *virtus* ought to prick the conscience of the Christians, he writes, if they cannot display similar qualities in the service of the glorious *civitas Dei* (*Civ. Dei*, V, 18 […]). (269)

Augustine's residual respect for the pagan Romans is realized in his acknowledging that God had allowed its greatness as an empire (now fallen) precisely due to their overwhelming desire of *gloria.* For Augustine, this Roman desire for *gloria* had to be attributed to that heretical belief that there was no end to time but simply that there was only the dominant "sphere of demise and succession," where "the dead are succeeded by the dying" (Book V, 14) — an endless cycle of repetitions throughout successive ages. The pagan perception of time as cyclical-repetitive rather than linear-eschatological, where one is caught in an "'upward and downward path' and 'wheel'" (Cochrane, 483) resulted in the pagan Roman desire for apotheosis where "they wished even after death to live in the mouths of their admirers" (Book V, 14). As implied in these pagans' belief in the eternity of repute on earth while they are praised by generations of men, it was misplaced in a temporal glory. By contrast, it is suggested that Christians ought to place their trust in the final apocalypse when all the true things of God shall be revealed, and be inspired to true virtue by the *negative* example of these pagans: they thus have no reason to be "lifted up with pride" (Book V, 18). God "purposely granted" military success and greatness to these pagans as blessings for the here-and-now, since these men

> for the sake of honor, and praise, and glory, consulted well for their country, in whose glory they sought their own, suppressing the desire of wealth and many other vices for this one vice, namely, the love of praise. (Book V, 13)

As an implicit apology for the pagan concern for *gloria*, Augustine acknowledged that although this desire was itself a *vice*, it still served its purposes in the earthly

city for those who did not know God by restraining baser lusts of avarice, luxury and indolence. These 'few good men' of pre-Christian Roman history that Augustine had cited from Sallust are "not indeed yet holy" (*sancti*) but "only less base" (*minus turpes*) (Book V, 13). This perception of the pagan concern for *gloria* as inherently flawed thus militates against pagans' counter-narrative of a *civitas aeterna* of Rome unspoiled by Christian presence.

In this critical dialogue with the Classical past, Augustine was thus positing that Christian alternatives to the Roman ideal of *gloria* must be established upon a true way of virtue rather than fraud and deceit as these pagans did. By alluding to the myth which established Rome as the *eternal city*, namely its founding by Remus and Romulus, Augustine had concurred that the ideal of *gloria* in which pagan Rome had situated itself was but a 'shadow' of the true eternal city, the *civitas Dei*. As he states,

> And especially are all these things to be considered, because the remission of sins which collects citizens to the celestial country has something in it to which a shadowy resemblance is found in that asylum of Romulus, whither escape from punishment of all manner of crimes congregated that multitude with which the state was to be founded. (Book V, 17)

Romulus, wanting the *gloria* for himself, had killed his own brother, and the founding of the state itself was but a mere denial of crime ("escape") rather than true "remission" earned through divine grace in the gospel of salvation as Augustine highlights. This fundamental ideal of *Pax Romana* had a glory which it sought for its own sake, but the true *gloria* was a *gloria Christiana* found in Christ's imputed righteousness which Christians therefore ought to recognize,

and embrace in humility of service to God, in contrast with the pagans.

Conclusion: In / Beyond This Saeculum ?

As Christianity apologetics, Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* is more than an occasional work situated in the Goths' Sack of Rome. Engaging his pagan literary-historical sources with an admixture of residual reverence for pagan *Romanitas*, and Christian skepticism, Augustine's *magnum opus* demonstrates that Christian sacred *historia* is indebted to profane *historia* by appropriating critically from secular historical and mythological sources. This assertion of Christian ascendancy however is not just meant to silence his opponents; for Augustine, secular *historia*'s inadequacies were very much meant to direct one's eyes beyond this world to the mysteries awaiting the faithful in a Christian otherworld. In order to convict his pagan audience of their errors, and to affirm his Christian audience's exclusive beliefs, Augustine has demonstrated through his text that a preacher must not only tell or recount stories first found in pagan sources, but also subject them to rigorous Christian scrutiny and further Biblical exegesis. In the next chapter on Bede, I will study the functionalism of Bede's approach to writing ecclesiastical history — on the triumph of the *unam ecclesiam catholicum* — by consciously adapting pagan customs and structures of beliefs for the ends of Christian conversion of the masses. Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* will form an important and interesting link to these notions of storytelling (including historical narrative) as vital for affirming how Christian culture learnt to accommodate the pagan cultures it encountered on the British isles.

Teo, Chapter 4. Converting Profane Space and Profane Time: Functionalism and the Historicizing of Christianization in Bede's *Ecclesiastica Historica gentis Anglorum*

In the earlier chapters on Augustine's *Confessiones*, *De Doctrina Christiana*, and *De Civitate Dei*, I argued that Augustine made accommodations for the pagan past, demonstrated via a baggage of literature, philosophy, rhetorical practices and historical discourses which he came belated to as a Christian preacher. While conciliar teachings contemporary to the Nicene Councils and after would have stipulated these pagan writings as anathema or inspired by extra-Biblical sources, Augustine's reluctance to relinquish them is qualified ironically by efforts to justify them as part of his hermeneutic rites-of-passage in his life-narrative, and also, his rhetorical and apologetic enterprises as a Christian bishop. Similarly, in Bede's *Historica Ecclesiastica*, I focus on the conversions Bede made of the 'pagan' past, by re-aligning formerly pagan spaces — temples, battlefields, barbarian kingdoms and so on — and associated historical events of barbarian kingdoms' rise and fall alongside their subsequent Christianization. Mircea Eliade, in his book *The Sacred and the Profane*, has expressed the dichotomy between the "sacred" and the "profane" as where the sacred manifests itself in the "revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse" (the profane), thereby establishing the sacred as "an absolute fixed point, a center" (21). What he addresses as this center's irruption and "transcendence" of the profane world is further illustrated by claims for the presence(s) of an "opening":

> here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence, there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven.

(26)

The triumphalist view of ecclesiastical history runs in the vein of Matthew 24:14, that the "gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations" prior to cataclysmic events and the final redemption of all Christians from the powers of this world where Satan's power is bound forever. Evidences of this triumphalism are superficially discovered amongst the general population of Bede's historical narratives with accounts of martyrdoms and Christian missions that lend themselves to mass conversions, commensurate with the various displays of Christian powers like healing and demon exorcism. In the light of these, Eliade's view of an irruption of the Divine into profane history would, therefore, have evoked very much the picture of Christ and His church militant irrupting into the profane histories of the pagans in order to do away with these profane practices and beliefs once and for all.

While exploring these claims in the context of Bede's seventh and eighth-century Britannia for their possible bearings on pagan-Christian relations then-and-there, their inadequate nature must however be highlighted. My main argument regarding Bede holds that the interchange between the heterogeneous Anglo-Saxon pagan beliefs and practices and their Christian counterpart was a fluid one based on slippages and mutual identifications. Instead of emphasizing the triumphalist Christian worldview, my study of Christianization in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* bases itself on a functionalist worldview. The functionalist worldview of religion, pagan or Christian, holds that human society — especially in its religious practices and institutions — reflects "an ongoing equilibrium of

social institutions which pattern human activity in terms of shared human norms, held to be legitimate and binding by the human participants themselves" (O'Dea, 2). In the light of this, I thereby further argue that the religious beliefs and practices, pagan and (or) Christian, of the various Germanic tribes in that early medieval period of *Historica Ecclesiastica* are revealed by Bede to be in constant evolution, even while they continue to affirm the communal ethos of the barbarian tribes. In that sense, the Anglo-Saxon church of Bede's time did not remain static with its original emphases on soteriology (salvation) and haemartology (sin), individualistic notions unheard of in Germanic earth-based religions, but adapted itself selectively to the socio-cultural ethos of the barbarian communities it comes into contact with. Bede's *Historia* portrays an image of an Anglo-Saxon church which, while replacing that power vacuum left behind by the pagan Germanic religions of Britannia, also claimed to out-do them with assertions of a true providential God and His agency through His angels and holy men, thus fulfilling these barbarian societies' desires for social and cultural cohesion.

I. Re-reading the Gregorian Mission and its Repercussions: Missionary Expectations and Their Foils

Reading the historical-material-literary evidence presented on the Gregorian mission to Britannia and its ideological heirs in *Historica Ecclesiastica* also yields a fruitful look at this process of conversion these formerly pagan spaces go through, while affirming the communal ethos of the barbarian tribes. For a start, we must know that there is often a vast gap that is to be bridged between the

missionaries' expectations and the common perceptions that the pagan kings and their peoples — the *populus* — possess about Christianity the new faith. Christianity was in many ways a faith that came late to the barbarian societies which already had various religious practices and beliefs adapted according to their ways of life geographically, in spheres such as farming, seafaring, and military conquest.[12] As such, it had to make allowances for the existence of clerical difficulties in immediate, complete catechetical instruction of the masses that have been too inured in their pagan ways and habits of mind. Bede's corroboration of Pope Gregory the Great's letter to Mellitus within his narratives marks an astute recognition of this. While calling for the destruction of idols, Gregory also instructs that

> the temples themselves are to be aspersed with holy water, altars set up in them, and relics deposited there. For if these temples are well-built, they must be purified from the worship of demons and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their error and, flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God. And since they have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to demons, let some other solemnity be substituted in its place, such as a day of Dedication or the Festivals of the holy martyrs whose relics are enshrined there. […] For it is certainly impossible to eradicate all errors from obstinate minds at one stroke, and whoever wishes to climb to a mountain top climbs gradually step by step, and not in one leap. (I. 30)

The "flexible missionary methods"(Wormald, 46; 1979) advocated by Pope Gregory the Great must be studied for their various concessions. Primarily, a pagan temple, if considered an *aesthetic* feature, did not need to be destroyed but

[12] This is why various Germanic tribes can arrive at different names for gods who occupy the same functions within an overwhelming pantheon, such as Odin for the Scandinavian-Norse god of war, as opposed to Wode for the Gothic tribes' god of war in early medieval Germany.

could be re-consecrated and thus converted to Christian use for worship. This re-orientation of the pagan space of the temple to Christian monotheism had barely replaced the names of the gods the masses worshipped and consecrated their sacrifices to, without a change in venue — now of the Christian God and His saints. An affirmation in itself that these pagan temples were vital centers of life for the converted masses and thus cannot be removed, Gregory the Great acknowledged that for the Anglo-Saxon barbarians, worship at these pagan spaces — temples, shrines and consecrated natural spaces — had become ingrained habits. The only hope was for a ready change of allegiance to the new Christian religion on the masses' part followed by efforts at gradual catechetical instruction on the core tenets of the faith on sin, salvation and eschatology, to the eventual end that from this "temporary accommodation," converted masses might learn "to abandon it altogether"(Green, 320; Russell, 188). Gurevich himself has further commented on the proportions to which missionary expectations of the masses' response to the Gospel message have to be adjusted to the local expectations of the Christian religion's utilitarian value via recourse to a reading of the pagan converts as peoples with a psychology. As he notes,

> In recommending that the psychology of the former pagans be taken into account and that open conflict between the two religions be avoided as much as possible, Gregory […] recognized that their perception of Christianity could not help including the vast stock of their traditional beliefs and notions. He was not worried that these beliefs and notions had fused in the minds of the new converts with a superficial and partially distorted assimilation of Christianity. (Gurevich, 62)

In the light of this letter to Mellitus and the critical responses it evokes, we see that a compromise of rigid standards of iconoclasm, such as the total

destruction of pagan space, was favorable in many aspects to the Christian missionaries who desired to make an entry into the alien culture of the barbarians. A direct historical-material heir to this missionary approach of Gregory the Great is found particularly in the actions undertaken by his successor pope, Boniface IV, who demanded of Emperor Phocas the Pantheon of Rome, and subsequently conducted a ritual cleansing of the pagan space:

> After solemn purification, Boniface consecrated it as the Church of the Holy Mother of God and all Christian Martyrs; and once its company of devils had been cast out, it became a memorial to the Company of Saints. (II. 4)

Boniface's ritual cleansing of the Pantheon, while calculated to re-structure it to make sense within a Christian language of representation, whether architectonic or liturgical-performative, attests to the far-reaching impact that Gregory the Great's flexibility of approach towards pagan space had. For just as Gregory the Great advocated taking into account the psychology of the Anglo-Saxon barbarians, Boniface's action ironically constituted a preservation of the architectural legacy of pagan Rome for posterity, thereby bearing witness to the functionality of pagan space as newly re-oriented grounds of religious worship for Christians.

Also, Bede's portrayal of the Gregorian mission in its encounters with Anglo-Saxon royalty highlights the contamination of missionary hopes by the political goals and cultural burdens of the pagan kings who made up the target audience of the Gospel message, thus reflecting another foil to Christian missions on the British isle where communal ethos ran high. In reference to James C.

Russell's definition of the term "conversion," itself interchangeable with "Christianization," the dynamics of conversion itself invoke ambiguity. It can mean "individual conversion" where one possesses a "fervent desire to move towards higher levels of Christian perfection" (shown earlier as in the case of Augustine's life-story) (Russell, 27). Alternatively, it refers to the "interactive process between a non-Christian group and Christianity," showing the extent to which "specifically Christian teachings and practices shaped the cultural milieu of medieval folk high and low" (Russell, 30). De Reu also reinforces this problematic sense of "conversion," in the context of Christian missions to Germanic peoples, where individual conversion is played out in tension against group conversion when he states,

> Although the missionaries' ultimate aim was to convert the entire population, in the early stages they had to concentrate their efforts on certain 'profitable' groups. […] It was the ruler who had to grant the missionaries permission to preach in his territory. Moreover, the ruler stood at the apex of the social pyramid. […] Yet he could not concentrate all his energies on the ruler, for even as leader the ruler was subject to the rules of the group. […] Before embracing Christianity, therefore, the ruler had to be sure of the support of his counselors and nobles. (17-18)

The jubilant hopes of the missionaries on this Gregorian mission are attested to in Bede's reportage on their approach of King Ethelbert of the Angles, that "they came from Rome bearing very glad news, which certainty assured all who would receive it of eternal joy in heaven and an everlasting kingdom with the true and living God" (I. 25). The eschatological-soteriological language in which the reportage is couched, bearing promises of a blessed life in the thereafter, is a stark contrast with the dour reality of the political reception that this early missionary

expedition to Ethelbert receives. Contrary to the missionaries' hopes, the political authorities among the tribes they reach to were more interested in the repercussions of this Christian mission for their own culture and tribal ethos. Peter Brown best sums this up in his description of this episode as one where they "met a Saxon king determined to use every asset — including a new religion — to maintain his own distinctive, local style of hegemonial overlordship" (Brown, 208; 1996). Augustine of Canterbury and the other Christian clergy are isolated from King Ethelbert, commanded by him to remain on the isle of Thanet, and limited in their direct sphere of evangelism. Also, when meeting the king face-to-face, he refused to meet them in a house, "for he held an ancient superstition that, if they were practitioners of magical arts, they might have opportunity to deceive and master him" (I. 25). The power that the Christian missionaries held was as such ironically confused by Edwin with the *maleficium* (black magic) practised by sorcerers and magicians, thereby implying that for Christianity to maintain its presence on the isles of Britannia, it would need to make requisite accommodations for these pagans' prevalent magico-religious attitudes.

Furthermore, the unfamiliarity of the Christian concepts of sin, redemption and salvation and the original Greco-Roman terms in which they were couched to King Ethelbert warranted a large degree of alienation between him, the target pagan audience of the sermonizing, and the monks. As King Ethelbert himself confessed as an initial reaction, the "words and promises are fair indeed; but they are new and uncertain," and he "cannot accept them and abandon the age-old beliefs that [he has] held together with the whole English nation" (I. 25). This

presence of alienation therefore indicates the need for Christian clerics on the Gregorian mission to adapt the prevalent terms of their theology to Anglo-Saxon culture(s) and linguistic norms, and to downplay the elements within their theology which do not agree with the communal ethos of the pagan communities. This encounter of the Christian clerics on the Gregorian mission with King Ethelbert thus denotes a tension between the aims of individual conversion of the pagan king and the desired group conversion of his peoples, which highlights the need for Christian religion to remain functional and to affirm the values of these communities.

In highlighting the political advantages which the Anglo-Saxon church was expected by its target pagan audience of kings to fulfill, Bede's *Historia* reveals this prevalent functionalist approach taken by both pagans and Christians towards religion, marking a foil to Christian clerics' emphasis on the gospel message's exclusivity. As Pope Gregory the Great's successor, Pope Boniface's mission to the Northumbrian people, notably to King Edwin and his court, marks another example. As a pagan king, Edwin's willingness to convert has to be studied on various grounds. A primary reason is attributed to the presence of his Christian wife, Ethelberga (Ethelbert's child), and her Christian retinue, a marriage which is politically viable on grounds of dynastic succession, namely the merging of two great kingdoms via a heir to both. Edwin's willingness to consider Christianity as a faith to adopt suggests ironically that he has little qualms about allowing the Christian God to stand as merely one god amongst many gods worshipped by the Angles, but even goes as far as to imply a reason of political-military advantages

— victory in war or political safety from enemies — associated with the Christian God for possible conversion. The episode of his daughter's birth on Easter's Day after a failed assassination attempt by a spy of Edwin's political rival, King Cuichelm of the West Saxons illustrates this:

> as the king thanked his gods in the presence of Bishop Paulinus for the birth of his daughter, the bishop gave thanks to Christ, and told the king that it was Christ who had given the queen a safe and painless delivery in response to his prayers. The king was greatly pleased at his words, and promised that if God would give him life and victory over the king his enemy who had sent the assassin, he would renounce his idols and serve Christ (II. 9).

This episode is curiously structured, where the king's thanksgiving to his pagan gods is juxtaposed with the bishop's thanks to Christ, and a subsequent admonishment to him on the blessings bequeathed by Christ on his Christian wife. This episode is ambiguous in its suggestions of the political-military advantages that the Christian God can fulfill in lieu of Edwin's pagan gods, as one god among many. Edwin's ready promise to convert individually on the basis of political succor from a Deity above confirms this even more. Where the Christianization process as effected first through the pagan king's individual conversion is dependent on its ability to answer political hopes and ambitions of the monarch, this implies that Christianity has barely replaced its pagan rival(s) on the grounds of superiority, not on the basis of theology but chiefly on the ground of utilitarian value.

Bede's narrative re-construction of the scene of Edwin's decision to finally convert after a conciliar meeting with his thegns and counselors marks another illustration of this vital concern of the need for religion to be functional on the

part of the pagans, which becomes a reason for the adoption of Christianity, not necessarily its theology. In a scene where none of the missionaries are present, or contribute their opinions directly, the decision to convert is itself ambiguously oriented since it is built upon negative arguments and negational clauses on how ineffectual pagan religion is, and how inadequate it is. As R.I. Page has highlighted of this scene, it "looks as though Bede structured his debate, partly to produce an artistically and theologically satisfactory form, an elegant historical artefact, partly simply to disguise a thinness of source material" (107). Coifi, the high priest of Edwin's court as re-constructed by Bede, becomes one speaking voice for this mediated narrative written by a Christian monk (Bede himself) for the reason of suggesting ecclesiastical superiority over the pagan practices prevalent in his time, but via a negative self-example — himself. Drawing attention to himself as one who "have been more zealous in their service" [the gods'], Coifi argues that by right, the gods should have rewarded him more than any via the king's favours on his subjects, but reality proved "there are many to whom [he shows] greater favour, who receive greater honours, and who are more successful in their undertakings" (II. 13). That Coifi's quarrel with his own pagan religion is based on the ground of its powerlessness to advance him further in the sight of the king appears, as Page notes of Bede's tone of him, to be "worldly rather than clerical" (119), which I interpret as Bede's attempt to fashion an image of a power-hungry pagan priest who cannot look beyond the here-and-now in pagan religion and Christian religion alike.

However, the main justification for conversion to Christianity, instead of retaining the pagan traditions of yore, is advanced in this scene by an unnamed retainer of King Edwin, who, through a poetic analogy of a sparrow, narrates the limitations of Anglo-Saxon beliefs:

> when we compare the present life of man on earth with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems to me like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting-hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter's day with your thegns and counselors. In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it. (II. 13)

While little mention is made by Bede of the type of gods worshipped, their various cults in Northumbria and the scope of (material, liturgical etc.) sacrifices devoted to them, what is notable about this retainer's speech is the relative comparison of time categories in the light of this desire to "know" what lies ahead of the here-and-now. Like the brief shelter of the sparrow from the brutal elements within the warmth of the hall of feasting, so the Angles of Northumbria are similarly entitled to a certain knowledge of life and its enjoyment in the present ("this life") via recourse to the barbarian warrior ethos — reinforced in the image of Edwin feasting in the hall with his thegns and counselors. The thereafter is however an unknown to the Angles as the retainer characterizes it within their 'religion', insofar as he or the others know "nothing" beyond the time of feasting they have in the present life. The Angles' pagan religion, as reported

by the retainer, has thus failed to produce definite knowledge of what the thereafter has to bring, and by extension of this negative example of Anglo-Saxon paganism (itself a general category here), the Angles ought to convert to Christianity, a "new religion" which might offer what their religion cannot. As Bede's re-constructed understanding of a major cultural-ethnic decision to renounce paganism, Anglo-Saxon paganism must also be seen as an arbitrary category invented by him here, since the host of beliefs amongst them are not theologically encoded in a systematic way unlike Christianity's. While Christianity is portrayed as the imminent victor in this scene, the decision to convert arrives while the Christian voice is kept in silence and pagans dispute over its utilitarian value, thus affirming the functionalist aspect of religion that is brought to bear by the Anglo-Saxons on their choice of faith. The Christianization of the pagan masses therefore has to be seen as a process foiled by laborious conformism and adaptation to the cultural-communal ethos of the barbarians on the Christian clergy's part in lieu of a naïve triumphalism.

II. Charismata and Charisma: Popular 'Cults' and Power-Centers in Early Medieval Britannia Pre-Norman Conquest 1066

In the earlier sections, I have highlighted that the primary function of religion, whether pagan or Christian, is to be able to fulfill the role of affirming the prevalent socio-cultural institutions of its time, and hence to be utilitarian, in the light of the social theory of functionalism. In Bede's Northumbria, the rise of a popular version of Christianity, alternative to the orthodox Christianity preached

in early patristic councils, also reinforces that accommodating, and at times syncretic, phase of transitions between the pagan beliefs and practices of early medieval Northumbrians and Christianity. This recourse to a world-accepting tendency amongst both pagan and Christian faiths, regardless of creed or doctrine, is seen in the emergence of cults specific to Northumbrian life, various institutionalized enactments of "the important incidents, crises, and transitions in the life of the individual and the group" which render social solidarity to the Anglian community (O'Dea, 40). [13] As O'Dea further states of the cultic act, it

> is a social or congregational act in which the group re-enacts its relationship to the sacred objects and, through them, to the beyond, and in so doing reinforces its own solidarity and reaffirms its own values. (41)

That the local cult expresses the notable historical moments of a society and its people(s) is not new to the history of Christianization. As revealed in the early history of the Christian church, Paul the apostle's shipwreck on the island of Mellita exposed him to a near-death encounter in which, after being beaten by a snake and surviving miraculously, the barbarians "changed their minds, and said that he was a god" (Acts 28:6). As a demonstration of how antique and early medieval societies are essentially built on cults of hagiolatry, the possible slippage in identification between the 'holy men' and apostles of Christianity and the gods of pagan religions here foreshadows the syncretism that will evolve in Bede's Northumbria.

[13] The word 'cult' has pejorative associations with Satan, the diabolical and black magic (*maleficium*) in today's usage, and this use is what my thesis steers clear of.

In studying *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a reflection of Christian clergy adapting themselves to the communal ethos of Anglo-Saxon barbarians, the success of these hagiolatrous cults devoted to *Christus Victor*, his saints and their shrines and relics, must therefore be studied as long-term syncretic projects, which were there to stay. I have already referred earlier to the Gregorian mission, where Gregory the Great's hope for the *populus*' rapid conversion was matched with expectations that gradual catechetical correction would lead them to forsake their cult practices altogether — the remnants of Anglo-Saxon paganism. But as James C. Russell has noted of this period, Gregory the Great's strategy of "temporary accommodation" led itself to the danger of "long-term syncretism" in "cases such as that of the Germanic peoples in the seventh and eighth centuries, where a thorough and ongoing catechetical corrective to the accommodated form of Christianity was not provided" (188). Furthermore, the layers of stratification in these Germanic barbarian societies between the chieftain-king and his people would have prevented an immediate correlation between the full catechetical correction of the king and that of his people, owing to different levels of literacy, and "might even have proved counterproductive by alienating those who had no interest in the soteriological-eschatological core of Christianity" (Russell, 188). This is especially after his conversion, whereupon he undertakes immediate catechetical instruction and along with it, an education in Classical Latin as a legacy of the Christian learning he needs to understand the Bible. The various levels of understanding and tolerance towards Christian mysteries' and their elevated language, an aspect which Gregory allowed for as part of his

accommodative approach to pagans, ironically proved itself as the Achilles' heel of Christian exclusivity. This is what I will subsequently study in the phenomena of saints' cults and cults devoted to holy personages in the *Historia*.

a. Holy Men and Holy Bishops

As commonly known, a saint within traditional Catholic liturgy denotes a person who has performed miracles both when alive and after his or her death via his or her relics.[14] The exhibition of charismata by a select group of Christians was not new in New Testament times, since we have seen in the Gospels how Jesus Christ bequeathed his disciples with the power to bind and to loose on earth and in heaven (Matthew 18:18), and also, the apostles' power to heal, prophesy and to exorcise demons in the Book of Acts. This 'new power' of the Christian church is however also seen to be passed on democratically onto God's children, after the apostles' death, notably the new sacerdotal order of bishops and the martyrs of the faith. Counterpoised against the old magic of the pagans, and their "manipulative attitude" towards the natural environment, this new *potentas* has to be studied as a functional means of replacing the power vacuum left behind by ecclesiastical prohibition of pagan nature-magic (Goode, 177). Valerie J. Flint has drawn attention to the imminent tension between the church's efforts to forbid pagan magic in line with orthodoxy and its bid to re-invent it in the form of apostolic power, namely the figure of the *sacerdos*. She says,

[14] The canonization procedures for a saint have changed throughout time. I will stick to the display of charismata as the basic criterion for determining saintliness here.

> If the Christian priest proved unacceptable as the main vehicle for that magic the church chose to make its own, then other figures would have to be prompted forward to take up the burden with an urgency all the greater. (356)

As a central typological figure around whom the primary thrust in *Historia Ecclesiastica* to record "good things of good men" (Preface) is organized, Bede's calculated effort to include the mode of hagiography within his chronicle must therefore be studied as an intentional accommodation of the pagan desire for displays of charismata in true living charismatic figures, in lieu of the distant invisible God of the Old Testament.

The cult of Saint Alban, an early martyr cult which sprang from Alban's death in the Diocletian era of persecution (AD. 286-296), is an example illustrating this accommodation of pagan magic by the *ecclesia*. As Aron Gurevich has pointed out of saints' lives,

> It has been pointed out that themes from folk-tale and themes from hagiography were unconsciously mixed, and pagan motifs were assimilated into Irish saints' lives, forming an odd fusion (Bieler 1975: 14ff.). But this was not an Irish speciality. (44)

Alban's life in *Historica Ecclesiastica* starts *in media res*, after his conversion to Christianity, where he is brought before the local judge, a pagan, for interrogation. Refusing to renounce his faith, and being led out to decapitation, he who ardently desired a speedy martyrdom" "raised his eyes to heaven in prayer" and "the river ran dry in its bed and left him a way to cross" (I. 7). This uncanny manipulation of the element of water is again demonstrated in the final scene before his decapitation:

> As he reached the summit, holy Alban asked God to give him water, and at once a penitential spring bubbled up at his feet — a sign to all present that it was at the martyr's prayer that the river had also dried in its course. For it was not likely that the martyr who had dried up the waters of the river should lack water on a hill-top unless he willed it so. But the river, having performed its due service, gave proof of its obedience, and returned to its natural course. (I. 7)

The sacral functions of water within the Christian liturgy are echoed here, since it is through the medium of water that the rite of baptism is able to administer its remission of sins and hence, offers the catechumen the license to enter the kingdom of heaven. The pagan resonances within this episode however have to be brought to our attention too. A display of supernatural power over water, Alban plays a role similar to a pagan nature deity, and this episode ironically enacts what Flint has called a "possibly deliberate reversal of expectation" (267). If the river plays a vital function as a local pagan cult where reverence for water is shown, Alban's mastery over it through his prayers has inverted the whole hierarchy of supernatural rank, in which the Christian holy man can control the sacral element of water and is hence superior to it. Alban has thus ironically become the new magi (or new local god) in his martyrdom, owing to his displays of charismata — forming a center of local cult alternative to the region's river deities.

The holy man of Christianity, seen specifically to safeguard the *material* interests of survival and physical wellbeing within these barbarian societies in medieval Northumbria, also acts as a functional figure who substitutes for the *potentas* originally expected from the magi-priests of the old Anglo-Saxon paganism(s). Mellitus' virtue is seen to be manifest in his ability to extinguish a fire raging in the city of Canterbury which none had been able to extinguish,

despite his disabling infirmity. As the reportage of that miraculous incident shows,

> As the raging flames were sweeping rapidly towards his residence, the bishop, trusting in the help of God where man's help had failed, ordered himself to be carried into the path of its leaping and darting advance. […] the southerly wind, which had been spreading the flames throughout the city, suddenly veered to the north, thus saving the places that lay in their path: then it dropped out altogether, so that the fires burned out and died. Thus Mellitus, the man of God, afire with love for him, because it had been his practice by constant prayers and teaching to fend off storms of spiritual evil from himself and his people, was deservedly empowered to save them from material winds and flames. (II. 7)

Bede's reportage of the episode is curious because it intentionally creates parallels between the flames literally plaguing the city and the figurative flames of a love for God which Mellitus possessed. Also, he collapses the description of "storms of spiritual evil" which Mellitus is entitled to save the Anglo-Saxons from as a preacher of the gospel with "material winds and flames," almost as if they are the same thing. That the holy man must fulfill material interests of survival and wellbeing in the Northumbrian community when alive thus marks the accommodation Christianity has to make, via compromising its soteriological ideals in favor of an immediate material ideal of rewards and security as expected by the pagan masses which convert.

In addition, such formations of Christian cult practices of reverence for the holy man and his acts are not restricted functionally to his living person alone. The medieval period of Northumbria, as attested to in *HE*, gives us a vivid portrait of these cults — their practices and devotees — especially in the objects these holy men are associated with or have touched and handled when alive, almost as

if a living energy has been transferred from the saint's (or holy man's) body onto these objects beyond the physical eye. In lieu of the pagan idols which the Christian church has constantly stressed as ineffectual before these barbarian masses, they are now replaced with true living objects and amulets which have been Christianized — new Christian talismans of power. The oil that Bishop Aidan blesses and gives to Utta as a gift for his expedition to fetch Eanfled back as a wife to King Oswy acts via proxy Aidan's physical absence to calm the storm when poured into the sea (III. 16). Also, Aidan's holy presence almost seems to be contained in the post he leans against during his last moments. This post, "the only object untouched by the flames which devoured everything around it" when King Penda of the Mercians destroyed the village where he died, survives two local fires and finally is corroborated into the inner design of the church intentionally "as a memorial of this miracle" (III. 17). Almost like a totemic token of Aidan's holiness, it becomes a center of reverence where people have obtained "the grace of healing at this spot," and "many have cut chips of wood from the beam and put them in water, by which means many have been cured of their diseases" (III. 17). This final admixture of pagan tendencies to find solace in talismans of healing with Christian architectural design within the church is particular evidence of a local cult devoted to Aidan — a holy man — which had replaced Anglo-Saxon paganism with its own charismatic appeal. It reinforces what Gurevich calls "a naively 'consumers'' attitude towards the saint: namely, that the saint is the property of the inhabitants of the particular locality where his relics repose" (39). For barely associated with Aidan through his touch, a

contagiously holy one, the object of the beam is transfigured into a representation of his Real Presence. Thus, it highlights a Christian accommodation of the Anglo-Saxon barbarian ethos which is focused on communal living and wellbeing, in the survival of its people from illnesses via recourse to the supernatural.

b. 'Saint' Oswald Warrior-King

As another central figure of charisma, the cult of the sacral warrior-king in Anglo-Saxon Christian culture also marks an intentional accommodation of pagan communal ethos by the *ecclesia*. The blood bond between the barbarian king and his people(s) is an aspect which cannot be underestimated as a vital function within Anglo-Saxon culture, particularly the claims of Northumbrians towards national-cultural superiority. In recourse to Valerie Flint again, the "tenacity of the barbarian magical blood-kinship" is particularly asserted in their primary role as warrior-kings (381):

> Early barbarian kings were often chosen in time of war, and this association between the war leader and the powerful blood required for victory may, on occasion, have exerted an especially strong influence upon the emergence of a royal family, set apart by blood with a supernatural character. (351)

The cult of veneration established around King Oswald is a case-in-point of the great care taken by Bede to justify the cult of the sacral warrior-king in *HE*, placing him as a beatified figure alongside the holy bishops and saints of *HE*. In life, the figure of Oswald characterizes for Bede a portrait of compassion and piety akin to a holy man's. Recounting a story of how Oswald, while dining with Bishop Aidan, heard of the presence of a great crowd of beggars sitting outside in

the road, he ordered his own food to be taken out to the poor. This sign of compassion moves Aidan to pronounce upon Oswald's right hand a blessing, "May this hand never wither with age" (III. 6), which literally seals the stamp of beatification upon that hand. Severed subsequently from his body when he is killed in battle, Oswald's hand remained as a venerated relic uncorrupted by decay till Bede's day in eighth century Northumbria.

Yet Bede did not seem satisfied with remaining at the beatification of Oswald during his life with his good deeds, but even takes meticulous care to describe the range of charismata exhibited by his relics and various bodily parts. While the pagan sacrificial king's dismemberment is traditionally perceived in Germanic cultures to inspire regenerative processes within the land, Oswald's dismembered body takes on an alternative role as that of a Christian sacrificial king's. The earth taken from the battleground where Oswald fell in battle becomes popular medicine for illnesses when mixed with water and drunk, such that eventually the gradual removal of soil led to such that "a pit was left in which a man could stand"(III. 9). Hung from a village house's beam, the earth acted magically to proof the beam against fire during an accident of drunken merrymaking (III. 10). Similarly, the earth that received the water used to wash Oswald's bones "had the saving power to expel devils from the bodies of those who were possessed" while the dust which received the water had the power to heal the sick (III. 11). A chip of the oaken stake to which Oswald's decapitated head was affixed heals an Irish scholar from a great plague when put into water by Willibrod, which the scholar then drank. That Oswald's tomb also radiates a

supernatural form of healing energy is seen in an episode where a little boy struck with ague is healed after sitting by his tomb. The uses of these objects are Christian, meant to benefit mainly Christians, but as Flint has remarked, the roots are in "fertility magic," "annexed with care to an accredited leader and reordered"(383). This blending of pagan earth-fertility ritual, which links the king's broken body to the land's imminent health, with Christian *topos* of saintliness and beatification, marks ecclesiastical adaptation of the pagan sacral king-topos to Christian ends, ironically to affirm a syncretism of its own.

That the sacral warrior-king trope can even replace the role of the Christian bishop, acting as a surrogate *sacerdos*, is to be reckoned with as another aspect of the church's effort to accommodate pagan Anglo-Saxon ethos. Military conquest was after all a vital aspect of Anglo-Saxon barbarian life in bids to expand its territorial control, and realizing that "the powers attached to the blood kinship [between the king and his people's wellbeing]" were impossible to remove, the church had to transform them into "something resembling special graces or the rewards of Christian virtue" (Flint, 382). Oswald's quasi-sacerdotal power is demonstrated in the episode where he sets up a wooden cross, before engaging the heathen in battle, and "kneeling down, asked God that He would grant his heavenly aid to those who trusted in Him in their dire need" (III. 2).[15] This prayer procures an effect not dissimilar to the proclamations of a priest in which charismata is displayed in signs such as the transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood, or victory in battle against the non-Christian enemy. Bede affirms

[15] This episode also recalls Constantine the Great's political savvy in using the cross as his symbol of military expedition at the Milvian Bridge, attributing his success to the cross' sacral powers.

this miraculous succession of the sacerdotal in Oswald's warrior-king status later by stating that the battle was won when the "whole army did as he ordered" (III. 2). Also, adding that splinters of the wood taken from the cross have the power to heal both sick men and beasts (III. 2), he creates the aura of mystical power around the cross which Oswald has consecrated albeit in the capacity as warrior-king. Poised diametrically against the heathen as a Christian king, Oswald marks an intentional renovation of the sacral warrior-king trope in Anglo-Saxon culture to Christian ends of affirming Christian superiority, yet standing ironically in competition with the Christian bishop for the veneration of the converted masses.

III. Sibyllic Praise Converted: Towards Synthesis of the Heroic Past in Caedmon's "Hymn" and Beyond

I already argued that in theory and in practice, namely the various spheres of Anglo-Saxon culture from daily living to warmongering, accommodation for the pagan communal ethos was a primary focus of the Anglo-Saxon church of Bede's time as revealed in the *Historia*. This flexibility, while often compromising doctrinal integrity by downplaying the soteriological and eschatological in favor of the temporal-material benefits of conversion, was to create a brand of syncretism unique to the Anglo-Saxons, a mixture of barbarian values predominant in medieval Northumbria with Christian forms and beneficiaries. Before I end this chapter's study of Bede, I turn to Bede's transcription of Caedmon's "Hymn" from its original Old English into his own Latin tongue to highlight the similarity it shares with the *Mabinogion* in the assimilative attitudes

taken towards honoring of the heroic past:

> Praise we the Fashioner now of Heaven's fabric,
> The majesty of his might and his mind's wisdom,
> Work of the world-warden, worker of all wonders,
> How he the Lord of Glory everlasting,
> Wrought first for the race of men Heaven as a rooftree,
> Then made he Middle Earth to be their mansion. (IV. 24)

Here, under the Christian aegis of plenary inspiration, "Caedmon's gift had been given him by our Lord" (IV. 24). The poem is vested with the goal of Christian praise of the almighty Creator. Bede's transcription of the hymn's meaning however also betrays the assimilation of noticeably pagan tropes. This includes the motif of the universe as a World-Tree, *Yggdrasil*, with Middle-Earth the human world constituting one level *in media* (as in Norse-Germanic mythology) and the allusion to traditional motifs characterizing the Norse gods, such as Odin's nature as All-Seeing father-god of the gods who hangs from a branch of *Yggdrasil* to obtain his wisdom, to describe the Christian Creator-God's attributes (Davidson, 170). The poem sits at a juncture between the gods of the Anglo-Saxon paganisms, fading into their own twilight, and the Christian Deity, and can double-act as a paean to either side. This subtle, intentional honoring of Britannia's heroic past denotes converted barbarians' unwillingness to let go of a pagan literary heritage, in its oral sources and its central performer-figure of the bard, and the concession the church made to accommodate them for Christian ends of praise. This predominance of orality in the *Mabinogion*'s tales constitutes the next step in my study of the pagan survivals detectable in both the medieval legacy of ecclesiastical and secular literature, and their functional appropriations.

Teo, Chapter 5. From Myth and Folktale to Literary Story: Memorializing the Pagan Past in the *Mabinogion*

I. Pillaging the Past? Romancing The Cyfarwydd (Storyteller) and His Repertoire

> The very first thing that strikes one on reading the "Mabinogion" is how evidently the medieval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; […] he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely — stones "not of this building," but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestical. (Matthew Arnold, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, 51)

Matthew Arnold's comment implies that the medieval-Christian scribe's preservation of the Welsh heroic traditions was simply a case of building on the ruins left of these earlier traditions, hence signifying a mere corruption of the original pagan tale-types and motifs found in the Welsh *cyfarwydd*'s (storyteller) repertoire. By contrast, I argue that although educated Christian scribes enjoyed the monopoly of medieval literary culture, these scribes highlight the enduring appeal of oral-pagan Welsh traditions, when they re-made them to appeal to medieval values of good conduct. There is strong evidence for what I call the "mythographer's hand" in synthesizing these various tales and motifs of folklore and myth into a native cycle of Four Branches in the *Mabinogion*.

II. The Mythographer's Hand: Traditions and Synthesis

My central thesis is that a mythographer's hand is at work in the Four Native Branches of the *Mabinogion*, creating a synthesis of varying traditions and motifs found in the *cyfarwydd*'s repertoire.[16] This mythographer's hand represents two important functions in the *Mabinogion*, which I further argue to be 'his'

[16] This phrase, "mythographer's hand," is an umbrella term, and does not deny the possibility of various narrators, and scribes-redactors. I use this term to denote thematic and structural unity within the Branches solely.

celebrations of an oral-pagan past. Eleazar M. Meletinsky presents an extended picture of myth's purpose, which is relevant to my contention:

> In mytho-logic, everything that occurs 'before' is the first cause, the reason for everything that comes 'after'. Everything — from mountains to stars, from the animal to the plant kingdoms, social groups and the religious dimension, and cultural objects in general — derives from the mythical past in which the ancestors, culture heroes, and gods created the world as it presents itself to the mythological operator. The mythical past, however, is not only a remote epoch but is the time of primordial creation, the proto-time (*Ur-zeit*), the time of origin […] that existed before empirical time. (159)

Meletinsky's views foreground for me the primal functions of the mythographer's hand in the Branches, where a past of oral-pagan roots is intentionally preserved within a medieval Christian context. Firstly, the purpose of the mythographer's hand is to invent — in the medieval sense of *inventio* (meaning discovery or creation) — an "etiology" explaining Welsh-Celtic society's society (Doty, 9). Secondly, this mythographic project marks both a commemorative and creative-interpretive slant in re-turning to the past, where these ancient Welsh myths are relocated and revivified in their medieval storytelling contexts. As a mirror-image to Bede's *Historia*, which emphasizes Christian religion's functionality in its ability to answer the material-physical needs of the pagan masses and capitalize upon this aspect to convert them, the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion* highlight the "sociofunctionalism" of oral-pagan Welsh myths (Doty, 42). These myths are remade for a medieval-Christian audience by Christian scribes, to hold that society together via a ""cohesive" social cement," reinforcing their prescient communal values and making them visible to its members (Doty, 44).

The Four Branches' nature as originally oral-pagan myths re-inscribed as contemporary parables for a medieval-Christian audience is illustrated through their pragmatic orientation as tales able both "to teach" and "to divert" their audience (Ledgerwood, 74). Insofar as I argue that the medieval-Christian values that the Branches resonate with are core individual-societal values of rightful action, made with "moral force" as well as "physical force" (Ledgerwood, 75), wisdom and virtue, this is shown through their subject matter and thematic orientation as tales concerning good and bad "counsel." J. K. Bollard has drawn attention to the recurrence of "counsel" (*cyngor*) in the Second Branch of *Branwen* alone (291). I however extend his argument to the other Branches. I add that it is from three interrelated levels of childbearing, a warrior-king's dynastic rule, and the pursuits of love that the idea of good (or bad) counsel emerges to unite the Four Branches in a structural-thematic unity that reveals a synthesis of oral-pagan traditions for a didactic purpose.

III. The Cause of Kingdoms: Meditations on the Body Politic

The adaptation of the wasteland myth to the end of fashioning tales on "governance" (Hanson-Smith, 162), namely the art of ruling oneself and one's household and family well, forms an aspect of the Four Branches' mythographic meditations on what good counsel constitutes. Meletinsky claims that myth "is fundamentally about the transformation of chaos into harmony," wherein "primitive man defines harmony in […] a way that it includes all the axiological and ethical aspects of life" (156). Within the Branches, each character's

contribution of a vital role in the "sempiternal creation; destruction, and re-creation of the world," through their individual and collective selves, forms a variation on the theme of good counsel: the rightly-guided actions promise a new lease of life for their communities, while those wrongly guided ones thwart this fulfillment by advancing the communities concerned into a wasteland state (Eliade, 145).

(a) Sovereignty as Governance-of-Will in *Pwll, Prince of Dyfed*

The embedded Celtic notion of "sacral kingship" within the wasteland myth marks a traditional aspect of the myth, where the king is seen to be a demi-god capable of transforming the condition of his land from fertility to barrenness, and vice versa, according to his health, and his actions (Mac Cana, 117). James Frazer has drawn attention to this intertwining of the king's physical condition with the land's health where

> the king must not be allowed to become ill or senile, lest with his diminishing vigour the cattle should sicken and fail to bear their increase, the crops should rot in the fields, and man, stricken with disease, should die in ever-increasing numbers. (267)

Moreover, the proving of the king's virility in marrying his female-divine consort and uniting with her sexually to produce offspring is seen to be consequentially linked to the promotion of the "fruitfulness of the earth, of animals, and of mankind" (Frazer, 141; also see Mac Cana, 121). This sacral-sovereignty aspect of the wasteland myth emerges as I argue within *Pwyll* through its emphasis on Pwyll's continuation of his kingly lineage through his son by Rhiannon, but is adapted by the mythographer's hand to reinforce the didactic lesson of the king's

need for good counsel to rule his kingdom and his household, since the king is the head of the body politic.

This re-fashioning of the sovereignty motif as governance over one's will is seen in *Pwyll* through the social-communal expectations that Pwyll and Rhiannon's marriage is subject to. On the traditional-mythic level of storytelling, Pwyll's encounter with Rhiannon, ensuing in his wooing of her and their marriage, evokes the pagan trope of the union between the sacral king and his "tutelary goddess"-consort (Parker, online source). Rhiannon, as Patrick Ford observes accurately, is first seen riding on a magical horse which no man might catch up with, a hint of her cultic link to the horse goddess, Epona, a fertility goddess, while her name itself "derives from a Celtic form meaning "divine queen"" (207). This marriage between Pwyll and Rhiannon — the latter who has become substitutable with a mythic embodiment of Sovereignty in her name and faerie origins — is thus, on the mythic level, assumed to produce offspring, the "young god"-king who will replace his old father after the latter's death to ensure a continual blessing of the land (Loomis, 57). This originally mythic proof of a king's virility — and also, his spouse's fertility — is however adapted as a proof of how Pwyll reacts as a king to courtly counsel. How Pwyll handles his courtiers' counsel as king is thus foregrounded as the First Branch's meditation on the opposition between the king's spiritual-moral qualities as opposed to his physical qualities, between his "Body politic" and "Body natural" (Kantorowicz, 9). Formulated as part of a medieval-Christian parable on how best a king should rule his household, and his kingdom, it illustrates the lesson that the "perfection

of the spiritual king redeemed any possible failing of the natural king" (Damon, online source), that the king who uses wise counsel in his rule is better than the king who just produces an offspring to continue his line.

As the Branch narrates, the men of Dyfed "began to feel heaviness of heart at seeing a man whom they loved as much as their lord and brother without offspring" (15). Summoning him to them, they petitioned to him to take another wife by which he may have offspring, for as feared, "Thou wilt not last for ever […] and though thou desire to remain thus, we will not suffer it from thee" (15). The fear of the king's premature death, of him being cut off in his prime without progeny, is a vital communal fear which encourages the community of Dyfed to advocate the deposing of the current queen, Rhiannon, and her replacement with another 'fertile' queen. As implied, the legitimacy of Pwyll's rule depends upon his producing proof of his virility through an heir; when it was lost, he would be disposed of (Darrah, 41). This fate applies too to his queen-consort's (in)ability to produce proof of her fertility through the heir. Pwyll's reaction to the courtiers' counsel however marks an attempt to hold back this communal desire for Rhiannon's deposing, instead of obeying it within the rules of primitive Welsh-Celtic society. As he asserts, he would submit to the courtiers' counsel only should Rhiannon's infertility continue one year's time from the current council (15). This episode in *Pwyll*, where Pwyll's politico-legislative role as king is emphasized by his asserting his supremacy of will over his courtiers, thus reveals the mythographer's hand re-configuring the sovereignty aspect of the wasteland myth to a medieval *ethos* of sovereignty. As implied, true governance over one's

court, as a result of one's governance over one's will, is good counsel: it justifies a 'might-of-will-is-right' perspective as preferred to the traditional Welsh-tribal emphasis on fertility as the right-to-rule.

The introduction of the "Calumniated Wife motif" (Wood, 65) of European *Volksmärchen* into the narrative marks another aspect of the mythographer's re-invention of the sovereignty motif for a medieval-Christian audience. As a traditional folkloric motif, it highlights the reflexes of a society in resorting to the creation of a "scapegoat" — a "material vehicle" through which the "immediate expulsion of evil" might be attained — when unexpected or untimely factors like the visitation of death, illness and the loss of one's property via supra-human or invisible forces (in this case, the malevolent faerie world that steals Rhiannon's child) sets in (Frazer, 566). The midwives' exchange upon discovering Pryderi's mysterious disappearance is an example:

> 'Alas,' said one of the women, 'the boy is lost!' 'Aye,' said another, 'it would be but small vengeance to burn us or put us to death because of the boy.' 'Is there,' asked one of the women, 'any counsel in this matter?' 'There is,' said another, "I know good counsel,' '[…] Let us kill some of the pups and smear the blood on Rhiannon's face and hands, and let us thrown the bones before her, and swear of her that she herself destroyed her son […].' (15)

In mythic terms, the midwives' strategy of handling the infertility caused by the child's disappearance — a sign of the wasteland state — is to find a scapegoat, namely Rhiannon herself by blaming her for infanticide. There is however also significant re-invention of this tradition of the Calumniated Wife motif wherein Rhiannon departs from the "passive" calumniated figure (Wood, 70) by summoning to herself "teachers and wise men" as her defense (16). As shown in

this contrast, between what the midwives regard as "good counsel" in slandering a good woman's name, and Rhiannon's wisdom in refusing to wrangle with them, the theme of good counsel continues to emerge as part of the Branch's commentary on the Christian virtue of governance over one's will (fortitude) as a form of sovereignty. Furthermore, Pwyll's reluctance to hear of the charge of infanticide represented by the maids and his men who overheard the malicious slander against Rhiannon, in refusing to divorce her, affirms Pwyll's preference for true wisdom in weighing the charges. As he replies to this charge, "No cause had they to request me that I put away my wife, save her having no offspring. But offspring I know her to have, and I will not put her away. But if she has done wrong, let her do penance for it" (16). Pwyll's reply reveals a certain refusal to place exact blame on Rhiannon, as shown in the tentative-sounding qualifier "if," which points more to a need to maintain his sovereignty under duress of a public demand for justice. As a sign of his wise counsel as a king who does not listen to the slander of his courtiers to end up divorcing his wife, it marks the mythographer's concerted attempt to foreground the ideal of a sovereign king with wise governance over one's will, and hence a re-invention of the sovereignty *topos* within the wasteland myth.

The subplot of Teyrnon Twryf Liant and his mare which foals every May-eve and yet which "no one knew one word concerning her colt" (16), is another variation introduced into the First Branch on the re-invented theme of sovereignty as correct governance over one's will (good counsel). Ford has highlighted the particular "hippomorphic" substitutions between Rhiannon as a literary prototype

of a horse-goddess and the colt in their disappearing offspring, stolen both by faerie beings (210). Here, in this study of the mythic schemata, I however focus more on the effects of Teyrnon's (himself another king-figure as lord of Gwent Iscoed) actions on this hippomorphic relationship as further demonstrations of wise counsel. Teyrnon's attempt to halt the cause of the colt's infertility by striking off the "Monster Hand" is a decisive action that crosses over into the main plot of Rhiannon, the Calumniated Wife (Bollard, 286). It restores the colt to the mare, breaking its cycle of borne infertility as caused by malevolent faerie; it also breaks the cycle of thwarted fertility borne by Rhiannon in his discovery of her baby. His first counsel with his wife to find the cause of the mare's disappearing foal thus unfolds into the second counsel to raise the young baby to manhood, which subsequently ends in the third and final counsel to return him to his parents. As the narrative affirms through this threefold development of the counsel between him and his wife, the rewards for good counsel are immense: it earns them thanks from Rhiannon for her deliverance from calumniation, thanks from Pwyll for his lineage's restoration, and Pryderi as a foster-son to reward them materially and spiritually (16). As wise counsel undertaken by Teyrnon, in these various actions of breaking correlated mythic cycles of infertility, this development in the narrative thrust of *Pwyll* points towards the desirable nature of wise counsel as rewarding for the king. It further points to a mythographic re-invention of the sovereignty aspect in the wasteland myth for pragmatic purposes of instructing a medieval-Christian audience in good conduct.

(b) Apocalypse Then in *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr*

In addition, the Second Branch of *Branwen* expands and constitutes a variation on the re-invented sovereignty aspect of the wasteland myth, through its reflections on how wise and bad counsel affects the successes and failures of dynastic succession and diplomacy. Matholwch's proposal to "unite the Island of the Mighty [Britain] with Ireland, so that they become the stronger" (22) via marriage with Branwen resonates with the mythic association of marrying a sovereignty-goddess-figure which I discussed earlier (Mac Cana, 119; Dumézil, 1973; 89). Welsh society's matrilineal focus, wherein Branwen is "one of the Three Matriarchs" in Britain, and the "fairest maiden in the world" emphasizes this association (22). By marrying Branwen, Matholwch allegorically marries the land of Britain, with Branwen embodying his spouse Sovereignty in the final closing of this ritual sealed via the vital elements of "the wedding feast of the kingship" and "the coition," both performed at Aberffraw (22) (Mac Cana, 119). This mythic evocation within *Branwen* sets the stage for a mythographer's *inventio* of a didactic tale about good and bad counsel via recourse to the sovereignty aspect in the wasteland myth.

The Celtic belief in "the truth of the ruler," that his embodiment of rightful kingly qualities would consequently lead to "peace and equity," "security of the kingdom's borders, and material prosperity," constitutes one means by which Branwen reveals the imminent successes and failures derived from good and bad counsel respectively (Mac Cana, 119). Matholwch's undue heeding of the "murmuring in Ireland" concerning Efnisien's mischief on his horses in Britain in

the second year of his marriage leads him to allow Branwen's calumniation, whereby she is to cook in the court and receive a blow daily from the cook on her ear, although she was not the direct culprit of her brother's mischief (26). Matholwch's response to accusations against his queen-regent, as opposed to Pwyll's measured reluctance to punish Rhiannon, is one where he blindly accepts his courtiers' counsel to place a ban on the ships, "so that none may go to Wales, and such as come hither from Wales," to "imprison them and let them not go back, lest this be known" (27). As an action springing from a ruler's execution of incorrect judgement, and his punishment of the wrong person (his wife) based on gossip, Matholwch's allowing of Branwen's calumny is ill counsel, adding onto that his intentional alienation of Britain and Ireland's diplomatic ties to cover up this calumny. Translated into mythic terms, his flouting of the ethical requirement of the sacral king that he must exhibit "rightful" qualities, unblemished in conduct, is tantamount to his deposal as Bendigeidfran demands: by mistreating Branwen, he is thus abusing Sovereignty incarnate (Mac Cana, 119).

Efnisien's status as a mythic-literary archetype of the troublemaker-figure (or trickster), a residual motif of the "pixie portion" of the *fée* world which engages in mischief out of "sheer love" of it, is also adapted as part of an over-arching mythographic project in the Four Branches (Gruffydd, 15). Insofar as Efnisien's troublemaking nature is highlighted in *Branwen*'s beginning, where he "would cause strife" between his kingly brothers, Bendigeidfran and Manawydan, "when they were most loving" (21), the mythographer takes care to highlight the dangerous potential of his actions to hasten Britain and Ireland into a destructive

apocalypse, a mythic event which introduces the wasteland's conditions of infertility and death to both.[17] Efnisien's troublemaking — actions taken without good counsel — undermines not only his family's order, but also nations', and the cosmic order represented in childbirth and magical re-birth (resurrection). His throwing of Gwern into the fire first thwarts Matholwch's symbolic gesture towards diplomatic peace and order which conferred the new kingship upon Gwern. As Matholwch's offspring, Gwern typologically represents the mythic young king who inherits Matholwch's rule when he dies or abdicates his authority (Mac Cana, 117; Loomis, 57). Efnisien's act thus further thwarts that vital lifeline, creating not only a figurative barrenness in Branwen in her loss of her child, but also a literal and spiritual waste in both lands by initiating war and mutual genocide, which lead both lands to desolation.

The widespread scale of the apocalypse Efnisien's troublemaking causes is further extended to the symbol of *Annwn* (the Welsh Otherworld), namely the "cauldron of rebirth" (Ballin, 217). While the cauldron's origins are introduced as a tale-within-a-tale initially, its destruction within the main plot by Efnisien marks another thrust of the Wasteland narrative's development that ensues due to his rash actions: a further degeneration into chaos that demands a 're-fertilization' of the Wasteland both nations are transformed into. First found by Bendigeidfran in his encounter with a monstrous giant couple who fled from Ireland when persecuted by Matholwch, the discovery of the cauldron links it with the world of

[17] An Old Norse analogue to this destructive trickster-figure is Loki, one of the *Aesir* (principal gods) who initiates the apocalyptic battle at *Ragnarok* (a day of reckoning).

Annwn (the Celtic Otherworld), where dead men cast into the cauldron are resurrected the next day. Furthermore, the couple's inhospitable nature, where they "committed outrage, and molesting and harassing gentles and ladies" (25), acts as a reminder of "the pixie tradition" wherein "they cause mischief wherever they go" (Gruffydd, 19), thereby reinforcing the cauldron's otherworldly origins. The Irish's abuse of the cauldron to revive their dead soldiers — a renewal of life ironically meant for destroying more lives to win in the battle — is corrected by Efnisien's final decisive act of repentance, wherein he breaks the cauldron from inside, while mistakenly cast into it as one of the dead Irish. This remorseful act however also advances both lands into a Wasteland state tragically, by destroying the chances of magical resurrection the world of *Annwn* can bring through the cauldron. The narrator captures this tragedy that ensues from Efnisien's actions which lack good counsel:

> In Ireland no person was left alive save five pregnant women in a cave in the Irish wilderness; and to those five women at the very same time were born five sons, and those five sons they reared until they become grown youths and bethought them of wives and desired to possess them. And then each slept one by one with the other's mother, and they ruled the country and dwelled in it, and divided it amongst them all five. And because of that division the five provinces of Ireland are still so called. And they searched the land where the battles had taken place, and they found gold and silver until they became wealthy. (33-34)

Here the remnant of five pregnant women is emphasized, symbolically the new cycle of (minimal) life from which the lineage of Ireland must re-start as a result of the carnage initiated by Efnisien's troublemaking. The youths are forced under this desolation to break the infertility through multiple coition with one another's mothers, re-populating the land with their seed, while by re-discovering the spoils

of war — gold and silver — from the battlefield, they recover riches from the ashes of yore needed to sustain life. The widespread national-ethnic destruction that Efnisien causes with his troublemaker-nature is thus held up by the mythographer as a mirror to reflect the ill consequences of ill counsel when practised by a figure of authority.

IV. The Cause of Lovers and Lovemaking: Meditations on Human Desire and Moral-Ethical Consequences in "Math"

I argued earlier that the Four Branches offer meditations on the theme of a king's right-to-rule, dependent upon the practice of good counsel, by re-orienting the mythic and folkloric motifs of earlier Welsh-Celtic traditions towards a didactic end of mirroring the good and bad consequences of good and bad counsel respectively. Here, I study the structural-narrative intertwining between love, death and animistic metamorphoses of humans as another facet of the *Mabinogion*'s mythographic re-invention of oral traditions. As a primal human desire, the need for love as a form of emotional-spiritual-physical fulfillment is universal, straddling borders of divide between ages and faiths. The mythographer's hand marks an adept understanding of this where he adapts the folkloric-mythic *topoi* available to him to comment on the counsel lovers undertake to attain their desires' fulfillment through their ethical effects of punishment and reward.

The plots of "Wooings" and "Elopements" in the Fourth Branch, *Math Son of Mathonwy*, enact the mythographer's concern over these cycles of punishment

and reward derived from Celtic tradition as the consequences of good and bad counsel (Rees and Rees, 291). Structurally, they portray the "eternal triangle of two men in conflict over one woman," but more importantly on the thematic level, the "clash between morality and erotic love" (Rees and Rees, 286). In *Math*, we learn that Gilfaethwy, son of Dôn "set his heart" on Goewin, and loved her such that "his colour and his face and his form" were "wasting away for love of her" (47). Gilfaethwy's poise as the suffering, passionate lover is however at odds with the "magical taboos" hedged around Math as a sacral-king-figure to protect his sacral powers, wherein he "might not live save while his two feet were in the fold of a maiden's lap, unless the turmoil of war prevented him" (47) (Spence, 59). As his counsel to Gilfaethwy that sighing is not the way "that success will be won" in wooing Goewin (48), Gwydion's use of "the art of illusion" (*glamourie*) — an aspect of Celtic magic — to affix false appearances to his gifts to Pryderi becomes fundamental in this wooing plot (Spence, 18). By fomenting discord between Math and Pryderi, he thus distracts Math's attention towards an impending war with Pryderi, thereby disrupting the footholding ritual and creating an opportunity for him and Gilfaethwy to return to Caer Dathyl to rape Goewin (50).

Here, this wooing plot's significant moment occurs when the wooing degenerates into unlawful rape, committed both against the lord and the maiden's will, and is only justly redressed by Math's magical powers. As revealed in Math's pronounced curse, Gwydion's ill counsel leads to their punishment in shape-shifting — a form of penance for misleading Gilfaethwy the wooer towards

the socially-morally taboo act of raping a virgin. Thus the narrator states:

> And then he took his magic wand and struck Gilfaethwy, so that he became a good-sized hind, and he seized the other quickly (though he wished to escape he could not), and struck him with the same magic wand, so that he became a stag. 'Since you are allied together, I will make you fare together, and be coupled, and of the same nature as the beasts whose guise you are in; and at the same time there be offspring to them, that it be to you also. And a year from to-day come hither to me.'(52)

This punishment is thematically and structurally interesting in various ways. In mythic schemata, just as Goewin's rape typologically replicates the myth of the rape of the spring goddess of the land which hence leads to the land's infertility, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy must return fertility to the land as a redress via coupling thrice and bearing animal-human offspring.[18] Yet, as Sarah Lynn Higley observes, this rapid interchanging of male and female genders between them ensures that "both men will suffer the humiliation of being *sorðinn*" (penetrated by a male) (online source). The qualifiable gravity of the social-tribal embarrassment both brothers are forced to feel in the taboo acts of incest and sodomy thus marks a primitive justice that the medieval mythographer appropriates as *Math*'s reflection on the punishment that ill counsel in love can bring about when it clashes with social-tribal morality.

In direct contrast to the wooing plot, Blodeudd's elopement plot marks a variation on the theme of ill counsel as advised by lovers, and the punitive price to pay for the heeding of such ill advice. Blodeudd's assertiveness in confessing her

[18] The mythical schema is not only Celtic however, and we can find this in the Classical myth of Hades' abduction of Persephone, whose disappearance leads the land to go barren when her mother Demeter goes in search of her in the underworld.

love for Gronw, reinforces the crucial aspect of the Elopement plot in Celtic oral traditions where "it is the woman who chooses the man and compels him to do her will" (Rees and Rees, 291). Moreover, her active role in conspiring to remove her current husband, Lleu Llaw Gyffes, conforms to the "Faithless Wife" figure in folkloric tale-types, with her impostures to obtain his secret and use it against him (Thompson, 115). Deceiving Lleu under Gronw's counsel, she coaxes him to demonstrate the fatal position which will kill him, so that she can best prevent it according to her memory, which she claims to be a "surer safeguard" than Lleu's (59). Lleu's failure to question her claim's incredulity especially affirms this folkloric cycle of the lovers' "beguiling of cuckolded husbands" (Thompson, 202), where he displays "less of divine acumen than most mortals would have credited him with" as the silly cuckolded husband (Spence, 32).

In Blodeudd's Elopement plot, it appears however that the mythographer was not content to remain with a mere repetition of these folkloric-mythic patterns of husbands' cuckolding and wives' success in adultery. The synthesis of the traditional-Celtic "Hung-up Naked Man" motif, originally a symbol of the god who hangs in mid-air to gain illumination, marks a subtle moralizing of the Elopement plot to highlight how ill counsel-in-love leads to unpremeditated knowledge, thus capable of inviting unwanted suffering (Loomis, 19).[19] Just as Adam gains knowledge from eating of the forbidden fruit upon obeying Eve's ill-advised counsel in Judeo-Christian theology and falls into sin (Genesis 3: 6),

[19] Odin, the head of the Norse pantheon, is a variant of this hanging man motif, where he hangs on a branch of Yggdrasil to obtain foresight and wisdom, and like Lleu, for nine days.

similarly, Lleu hangs naked in mid-air as Blodeudd counsels deceptively with one foot on a bath-tub and the other on a he-goat, metamorphosing animistically into an eagle upon the delivering of the fatal death-blow. In eagle-form, he scales the branches of the oak tree, an archetype of knowledge in druidism, as a sign of initiation into higher knowledge of the Otherworld (Spence, 43). The cost of this initiation into the Otherworld state is however heavy, as we are reminded, since it involves physical decay with maggots feeding off him. This terrifying fate of decay Lleu has to suffer betrays a medieval Christian-scribal interpolation — a twist of misogyny — to the elopement plot, where Lleu's physical-spiritual suffering is linked to unpremeditated knowledge of the Otherworld, wrought through a woman's false counsel.

As an appropriation of the folkloric aspect of "wishes rewarded and punished," wherein "wickedness is properly punished," the punishments Gwydion pronounces on Blodeuedd for her betrayal of trust against her husband form a sense of closure on the Christian-scribal twist of misogyny added to the cycle (Thompson, 134). As narrated,

> And then Gwydion overtook her too, and he said to her: 'I will not slay thee. I will do to thee that which is worse; […] I will let thee go in the form of a bird. And because of the dishonour thou hast done to Lleu Llaw Gyffes thou art never to dare show thy face in the light of day, and that through fear of all birds; and it be their nature to mob and molest thee wherever they may find thee; and that thou shalt not lose thy name, but that thou be for ever called Blodeuwedd.' (62)

Gwydion's judgment upon Blodeuedd is significant in its ritualistic resonances. Created from "the flowers of the oak," "the broom, and "of the meadowsweet", Blodeuedd's metamorphosis from a flower maiden of diurnal-vegetative origins

into a night owl (nocturnal animal nature) typologically represents her shift from virginity into the Hag of the Night — the darker side of the feminine goddess-aspect she represents as her eternal punishment for her crime (58). The hostility pronounced between Blodeuedd and other birds also affirms this transformation, where she represents in her owl-form the Hag-phase of the feminine goddess-aspect with its terrifying associations: contagion, death, evil and ugliness — ironic since her new name is Blodeuwedd ("flower-face"). Blodeudd's punishment, which echoes the apocryphal Christian myth of Lilith, Adam's first wife who refused to submit to him and then is later changed into a night-owl, therefore thematically marks the elopement plot's thrust towards its moralistic resolution. In betraying moral standards of sexual fidelity for the right to enjoy erotic love, Blodeudd is characterized misogynistically as a figure of misguided counsel, misguiding other men and herself misguided — an example of how the mythographer re-cycles his oral-pagan material for didactic purposes of revealing the ill consequences of wrong counsel.

Conclusion

In memorializing these mythic cycles of the *Mabinogion* — specifically the Four Branches — as part of their vital national literary heritage, the Welsh scribes had preserved the pre-Christian legacy of their 'past'. In this process of preservation, the medieval Christian scribes were not just passive receivers or copyists. Rather, they sought to re-invent a new cultural mythology relevant to the concerns of their age by rescuing these myths and folkloric patterns *ex illis tempore*, using them

functionally to affirm prescient values of good social and moral conduct. If the pagan tales and beliefs of the past are made to speak, they no longer speak their own voices, but rather, speak the moral lessons that the Christian scribes had intended for their audiences' instruction other than the diversions of listening to good stories

Teo, Epilogue.

On September 13, 1440, Gilles de Rais — a parishioner of the church of Saint-Marie, Nantes — was presented before an ecclesiastical tribune, on the grounds of accusation that he had "repeatedly practiced the dreadful invocation of demons," "sacrificed and made offerings to these same demons," and "contracted with them" (Bataille, 156). This indictment against de Rais on the basis of a practice of paganism is simultaneously associated with a diabolism, presenting a paradigm of paganism as simply demon-worship. My thesis however militates against this tendency to read the definition of the term "paganism" as a singular tradition, by using "paganisms" instead to denote the various historical and geographical domains within which they differ. In addition, my texts of study, Saint Augustine's *Confessiones*, *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De Civitate Dei*, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and the *Mabinogion*, reveal a broad spectrum of sentiments towards pagans and paganisms in their respective regions of practice and belief, militating against the singular notion that a consorting with the Other (categorically the pagan) must be a diabolic enterprise.

The three literary forms of Christian autobiography, Christian catechetical manual and Christian *historia* found in Augustine's respective texts instead present a less confrontational interpretation of this motif of the Christian consorting with the pagan Other. Christian hermeneutics is indebted to the rhetorical-philosophical-historical writings of Classical *auctores*, insofar as Augustine the Christian theologian had "'tied' together" his writings with pagan citations and pagan literary typologies (Minnis, 10). The civic-pagan culture of Augustine's fourth-century Rome was too deeply ingrained as part of Augustine's

Classical *paideia* in letters, such that he could not divorce himself totally from them. Rather, he tried justifying them respectively within the schemas of his redemption from reading the Classics too literally, his conversion of pagan rhetoric to Christian preaching, and the co-option of pagan history into sacral history.

With a view to chronicling local British history, Bede's *Historia* presents a contrast to Augustine's writings with its emphasis on the Anglo-Saxon church's accommodations towards an alien barbarian culture. This chronicling of local martyrs' tales and insular hagiographies points towards a deeper undercurrent of local pagan folk-beliefs, where local Christian saints and their temples barely triumphed over pagan deities and groves by appealing to the folk belief in a religion's functionality — that it must answer the immediate material needs of this life.

Our final text of study, the *Mabinogion*, presents a unique contrast with the aforementioned texts, since it is the text of solely literary-narrative import, rooted in Welsh-Celtic myths and traditions. As a medieval artifact transmitted via the Welsh scribes, it reveals a lingering mythographic respect for Wales' heroic-pagan past, where its pagan traditions are preserved as literary stories to procure entertainment and instruction for the audience.

In relation to the pagan-Christian divide, we therefore see how these authors and texts engaged the paganisms of their times and their cultures creatively, instead of re-casting them as a diametric-diabolic opposite to orthodox Christian culture. In no way had the devil made his presence felt as an antagonistic

manifestation of the Other in these works; rather, these works point to a reluctance to discard a pagan past with its rich traditions.

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